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ABSTRACT

Presented are five papers and reactions of panel members from the 1973 conference on special education and decentralization sponsored by the Council of Great City Schools, Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children. R. Nystrand provides an overview of decentralization theory and process and suggests that reasons for the development of decentralization include a general distrust of professionals and the political and social aspirations of minority group members. Results of two studies are reported: the effects of decentralization on special education in two large urban school districts (E. Avery et al), and a survey of decentralization and special education in the Great City schools (N. Nash). M. Gittell focuses on the decision making process to distinguish political and administrative decentralization, and describes the impact of the process on such special education issues as mainstreaming and the right to education mandates. Discussed by M. Shedd are strategies and considerations involved in decentralizing the administration of special education in large city public schools. A conference summary is offered by E. Willenberg. Included in three appendixes is information about decentralized and centralized school systems in such cities as Atlanta, Detroit, and Cleveland. (CL)

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Report of the
Conference on

Special Education and School Decentralization

Maynard C. Reynolds,
Editor

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The organization of a conference—both the content of the program and the logistics—is dependent upon the dedication and energy of many people. In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to Ed Moore of the Exceptional Children's Program, Bureau of Adult and Occupational Education, who participated in the planning stages; Cleopatra Lawton, then of the Council of Great Cities Schools, who made all the Council's facilities available to us; and the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education staff who carried the burden of organization: Karen Lundholm, Nicholas Nash, and Bonnie Warhol. The editing and publication of this report was under the direction of Sylvia W. Rosen, Publications Editor for the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education.

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Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1975

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R.A. Weinberg & F. H. Wood (Eds.) *Observation of pupils and teachers in mainstream and special education settings: Alternative strategies.* (Spring 1975)

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Foreword

In participating in the formation and support of the Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children as a subsidiary of the Council of Great City Schools, the Exceptional Children Leadership Training Institute (Leadership Training Institute/Special Education) is reflecting some special concerns of the Exceptional Children's Program of the Bureau of Adult and Occupational Education. With its major focus on the efficient delivery of educational services to children needing special aids, the Exceptional Children's Program is necessarily concerned with the school populations of large cities. Exceptionality is not peculiar to any one geographic area or socioeconomic group; children with different handicaps and learning problems are found in every part of the country, both rural and urban. However, the concentration of children with exceptional needs is greatest in the large cities of the nation for reasons that are characteristic of the cities. Thus, it is in these population centers that a major effort is required to improve the schooling of children with exceptionalities.

Since many school systems across the country are under judicial or legislative mandates to adopt right to education or mainstreaming principles, educators are necessarily seeking efficient ways of implementing the mandates. Special educators in large cities, therefore, are concerned with the effects of decentralization on the delivery of special education services to the children needing them and with the question of how special education should be organized under decentralization to comply with the mandates. As will be seen in this report, different solutions to the problems are being tried in different cities. Because each city is unique, the differences in the solutions are both necessary and inevitable.

This report is not intended to advocate any one solution to the problem of how special education should be administered in any city; rather, it is an exploration of the different ways the problem can be resolved. By bringing together in one book an examination of the different solutions, Dr. Reynolds and the Exceptional Children Leadership Training Institute have provided educators and school officials with the necessary information to make decisions based on individual needs and circumstances.

Dr. Reynolds and the Exceptional Children Leadership Training Institute have performed a signal service to all educators and school officials by sponsoring the conference reported here. The report is a

happy combination of theoretical and practical approaches to both special education delivery and decentralization and highlights many facets of each. It is a great pleasure for me to be associated with Dr. Reynolds in his endeavors to improve the delivery of special education to all children needing special services, and it was a particular pleasure to be associated with him in the conference reported here.

Edward R. Moore, *Head*
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Introduction

The scope of the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education (LTI/SE), since 1971, has included a strong concern for the problems of delivering special education services in the schools of the nation's large urban centers. Out of this concern came support for the organization and existence of the Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children, the association of special education administrators in the cities that make up the Council of Great City Schools. The Council is a nonprofit, membership organization representing 24 of the largest urban school systems in the country.[1] It was established in the early 1960's to provide a concerted voice at the federal government level for the school superintendents and board of education members in those cities whose size and problems set them apart from other cities and school districts. Because these metropolises are the greatest single suppliers of services to exceptional children in the country, it seemed fitting that a parallel organization of special education administrators be established. Since May 1972, therefore, the Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children has been meeting semiannually at the same time as the Council's board of directors, although in separate sessions.[2]

One of the activities sponsored by the LTI/SE was a needs assessment survey of the Committee members. Subsequently, the LTI/SE arranged several conferences on topics of pressing urgency: one in Miami, Florida, February 1973, which was devoted to the analysis and discussion of training needs in the Great Cities and was attended also by representatives of institutions of higher education and of state

[1]In the order of population, the cities are New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, Houston, Cleveland, Washington D.C., St. Louis, Milwaukee, San Francisco, Boston, Dallas, Pittsburgh, San Diego, Buffalo, Memphis, Denver, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Portland, Oakland, and Miami. The Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children includes all of these cities.

[2]Early leadership in meetings of the group was provided by Dr. Martin Dean, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, San Francisco, who had served as an adviser to the LTI/SE. Later, the group organized formally and elected a small executive group. Dr. Ernest Willenberg, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Los Angeles, was chairman of the group at the time of the conference reported here.

departments of education;[3] one in Washington, D.C. in May 1973, which focused on recent litigation related to special education programs; and the conference reported here, held in Boston, Massachusetts, December 1973, which focused on the effects on special education of school system decentralization, a subject which had been given top priority in the needs assessment survey.

Basically, the Boston conference was a training activity for Great Cities' administrators of special education and related programs. The participants were assistant or associate superintendents of schools in charge of programs for handicapped and gifted children, pupil personnel services (school psychology, school social work, and counseling), or programs related to attendance, bilingual education, and health. Although the scope of the conference included all such areas, the primary emphasis was on educational programs for exceptional pupils in relation to decentralization.

Decentralization itself is a source of concern for special educators for a number of reasons.

1. Urban systems are reorganizing their administrative structures and the process has had and will have significant impact on the roles and functions of special education administrators.

2. The decentralization of personnel and/or budgetary powers out of the central administration influences to a significant degree the planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation of special education and related programs.

3. Decentralization appears to affect the definition and quality of low-incidence programs for handicapped children differently from programs involving substantial populations.

4. The drive for innovation and diversity in special education programs may be considerably altered in decentralized structures.

5. The rash of legislation and court orders relating to the education of all exceptional pupils is creating forces for centralized controls and compliance, a situation that seems incompatible with the forces for decentralization.

Subsumed under the main purpose of the conference were the following goals:

1. To provide an overview of decentralization theory, history, and process.

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[3]This conference was held in cooperation with the University of Miami under the leadership of Dr. Philip Mann, Chairman of the Department of Special Education at the University. See P. H. Mann (Ed.), *Mainstream special education: Issues and perspectives in urban centers*. Reston, Va.: The Council for Exceptional Children.

2. To describe current problems in school systems involved in varying degrees in planning, implementing, and evaluating decentralization activities.

3. To summarize and organize insights from leaders who are involved in decentralization with the focus on problems in specialized areas of schooling.

4. To delineate and anticipate significant problems in the special education domain as they relate to decentralization.

5. To identify issues and problems in decentralization outcomes for organizers and administrators of special education.

Urban School Systems: General Problems

The problems of the large cities of our country are reflected in exaggerated form in their school systems. It is no secret that fiscally, most of the cities are in serious trouble. Tax bases have decreased, welfare rolls and costs have increased, municipal incomes are overburdened, and tax assessments are restricted by legislation. Sociologically, the cities are suffering from population dislocations, which have resulted in an overall decline in numbers but an increase in minority groups; increased crime, especially among lower age groups; social disaffection; and much political discontent.

In the school systems, the effects of these problems are often magnified. It is extraordinarily difficult to create positive learning environments for hundreds of thousands of children (e.g., New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia) in outdated buildings with minimal support staffs, material shortages, and interrupted and short-term federal funding assistance, in a climate of union-community power contests, strike threats, gang conflicts, changing student characteristics, violence, and conflicting community demands, while the clamor rises for more and improved services. In a sense, schools have become the focus of complaint for all the ills that beset our urban populations. It is no accident that the movement toward school decentralization paralleled the demands of minority groups for greater political participation.

An examination of the functions of schools cannot be divorced from consideration of the purposes of schools. The first are designed to implement the latter. Purposes are culturally determined at a specific time in history. Initially, public schools were deemed essential to provide a literate population capable of making political decisions in a democracy. With the influx of immigrants encouraged by industrialization, public schooling was conceptualized as the means of Americanizing the children of the newcomers and of transmitting to them the cultural values of the country. By the end of the 1920's,

immigration slowed to a trickle and the concept of public education began to change again. With the Depression of the 1930's, schooling was regarded as an acceptable means of keeping young people out of the labor market. It led to the post-war philosophy that free, public education is a social investment from which beneficial returns to all of society can be expected. This concept persisted until recently when the courts ennunciated the principle that all children have a right to education, which implies that the purpose of schooling is optimal, individual development.

Urban School Systems and Special Education

Until these landmark decisions of the 1970's, schools were neither prepared nor expected to serve all children. Prior to the 1930's, most children attended school only long enough to attain a basic education and few children with handicaps were tolerated in the system. Even when the school age was raised, school systems were still permitted to exclude and demit children who were difficult or troublesome to maintain in the regular classrooms. Indeed, teachers had the arbitrary power to reject children who did not meet their standards of normal behavior. The comparatively few handicapped children who were given the privilege of attending public schools were either isolated in special classrooms, which carried an onerous stigma, or expected to survive educationally as best they could.

It is to the credit of the special education school administrators and teachers of the country that even before the legislative and judicial mandates to provide optimal educational environments for all children by right, regardless of handicaps, and to institute zero-demission and inclusive attendance policies, they were advocating and advancing comparable goals. Given enough time and financial support, the experimental programs might have brought about change in entire school systems gradually and painlessly. But time has run out on them. The systems are expected to bring about change in the delivery of services almost overnight in the midst of funding shortages and social disturbances.

The greatest change demanded of school systems is in the provision of special education services. Although large city school systems were among the first to initiate day schools for handicapped children at the turn of the century, they were selective in the kinds of handicapped children they accepted and limited in the amount of funds they could earmark for such children. Following World War II, the attitudes toward handicaps of all kinds changed and increased state and federal funding made it possible for school systems to increase the delivery of special education services. Indeed, special education

classes were provided not only for children with identified handicaps, but for children who were difficult to teach and troublesome to maintain in large classrooms. "Educable mentally retarded" and "emotionally disturbed" became convenient labels for children who, basically, were culturally different. Disproportionate numbers of children in large city schools were so labeled and isolated from their peers.

For many urban children, English is a second and alien language. Many are isolated from educational growth by the language barrier, cultural misunderstandings, and poor performance on culturally biased tests which have locked them into slow tracks and special education classes. Even native speakers of English may display marked cultural differences. Although culturally different children are not handicapped in the traditional sense of the term, they require special educational aids that are usually provided by special teachers.

At the same time, many urban children with physiological, intellectual, and emotional problems have not been in the school system at all. Great cities' administrators of special education are able to provide statistics on the numbers of children they serve but they readily admit that they do not know how many truly handicapped children there are in the cities and how many are not being served by the school systems at all. Under the right to education mandate, school systems are responsible for locating and serving such children.

The confusion between cultural differences and intellectual and emotional deficiencies led many urban, minority group parents to condemn all special class placements for children. "Special education" itself became suspect and some minority group parents came to regard it as implicit educational discrimination. A number of courts upheld the view that the removal of children from regular classes was discriminatory except when clear proof could be established that a child would benefit from special placement. Meanwhile, parents of physically and mentally handicapped children instigated litigation that resulted in the judicial articulation of the right to education principle, that is, the principle that public schools must provide maximal educational opportunities in optimal settings for all children no matter how handicapped they may be. For children with mild to moderate handicaps, the setting was interpreted as the regular classroom.

Many parents of children with identifiable handicaps still believe that the self-contained special classroom is best for their children and they resist the idea of mainstreaming. Historically, of course, they have some basis for their distrust and the old attitudes die hard. Consequently, in some decentralized school districts, parents of handicapped children sometimes resist the introduction of mainstreaming in opposition to special education administrators who are required by law to

maintain it. Minority group parents, for the most part, support mainstreaming. The self-contained special education classroom required the identification of children as handicapped—labeling—as a prerequisite to the delivery of special services, but mainstreaming permits the delivery without labeling. Indeed, mainstreaming broadens the concept of special education to that of a resource for the entire school population rather than for identified, handicapped children alone.

Mainstreaming is not a new concept although the term is new and has come into prominence only recently. For many decades, children with mild handicaps and learning problems had been admitted to regular classrooms where they were expected to keep up as well as they could with minimal or no extra assistance. Thus, children were often forced to repeat grades until they were embarrassingly large in comparison with their classmates, or parents were expected to provide assistance outside of class to help the children keep up with their peers. When the children presented management problems, they were demitted.

The current concept of mainstreaming embodies a supportive structure. It has been found that most children do no better in special classes than they would in regular classes. Therefore, special educators are supporting the placement of children with learning problems and mild to moderate handicaps in regular classes where the regular classroom teacher can be aided by a special education teacher to meet the special needs of the children. The latter may spend all or part of their time in the regular classroom. They may leave it to go to the so-called resource room for special tutoring in areas in which they need individual attention; however, they engage in those regular classroom activities in which they are not differentiated from their peers, even if it is only in homeroom organization, physical education, art, music, and so forth. Most importantly, the handicapped children learn to live in the world with so-called normal children and the latter learn to value individuals as such and to accept individual differences.

Not all handicapped children can be mainstreamed, of course. Special classes and other arrangements are still required for those who are severely handicapped. According to the right to education principle, no child, no matter how profoundly handicapped, may be deprived of those educational opportunities that will enhance his individual development; consequently, a small proportion of profoundly handicapped children must be provided with facilities that are not available or possible in public schools.

Mainstreaming requires new orientations for both regular and special classroom teachers. Each must learn new techniques of working together and individualizing education. Thus, the organization and

operation of inservice training has become an essential concomitant to the development of mainstreaming. In some of the large cities, legislative or judicial mandates to implement the right to education principle and to eliminate special classrooms as much as possible were handed down at the same time that the school systems were in the difficult process of decentralizing control of the schools. In a sense, according to Dr. Gittell, the two movements—mainstreaming and decentralizing—are in conflict, at least in the sense that the first is based on mandates while the second is based on local choices.

Urban School Systems and Decentralization

In a way, decentralization is a return to an earlier mode of administering public schools. Dr. Nystrand pointed out that initially schools were controlled by neighborhood residents, usually on a ward basis. In the early years of this century, however, two trends led to the move toward centralization: (a) The growth of ethnic neighborhoods stimulated the fear that local control might circumvent the Americanization of children, and (b) educators were becoming professionalized. Indeed, the development of professionalism throughout the economic and social service aspects of national life was characteristic of the period. Centralization permitted the removal of schools from the political arena of ethnic control and their consignment to professional educators who could administer the entire city system from a central office.

The reasons for the recent development of school decentralization are complex. Among them are dissatisfaction with the products of schooling, a general distrust of professionals, the political and social aspirations of minority group members, and the changing population and economic facets of city life. It is also possible that centralization/decentralization is a cyclical response to the developmental problems of cities.

As preparatory background for the conference, the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education initiated two studies. The first was a survey questionnaire that was sent to all members of the Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children to collect data on the extent of decentralization in the cities and on the effects of that decentralization on the administrative and fiscal operations of the special education organizations. The results of this survey questionnaire are reported by Nash and further analyzed in Gittell's paper. The second study was an examination of decentralization in two large cities (Philadelphia and Chicago). The research team of three graduate students (Avery, Castro, and Clark) reviewed the origins and processes of decentralization in the two cities, and interviewed administra-

tive and school personnel as well as some parents on their views of and feelings about decentralization and its effects on special education.

Of the 20 special education administrators who responded to the survey questionnaire, roughly two-thirds were working in school systems which had decentralized in some way to some degree; the remaining one-third were attached to systems in which the school systems were still operated out of the central office. In many of the decentralized systems, however, special education control is still centralized, that is, control is still vested in the central office of the system in whole or in part. The clearest evidence derived from the questionnaire is that decentralization is conceptualized differently in each of the cities.

Dr. Gittell distinguished two kinds of decentralization, political (community control) and administrative, on the basis of the focus of decision making. A school system, thus, may be said to be politically decentralized when the districts (communities) in the system control the ways in which funds are spent, personnel hired and fired, and educational programs selected. The more these decisions are retained in the central office of the school system, however, the less decentralized the system may be said to be. Thus, decentralization-centralization should be seen as a continuum rather than as discrete states. Among the respondents to the questionnaire, only Philadephia and Detroit approached Dr. Gittell's definition of political decentralization; in all other school systems, major decisions are made in the central office and the decentralization, according to her rubic, is solely administrative.

If decision making is taken as the major criterion of decentralization, then mainstreaming is a programmatic form of decentralization. In mainstreaming, placement decisions for the optimal education of handicapped children are made on a child-to-child basis, rather than by handicap categories, and at the school building level, rather than in a central office. Within the school building, the educational program for each child is designed to fit his/her individual strengths and weaknesses rather than a stereotype. Furthermore, the skills of special education teachers are employed to maximize the individualized education of exceptional children, in or out of the regular classroom, according to the needs of the regular classroom teachers as well as those of the children; hence decisions on the delivery of special education services are not only decentralized to the school building level but to the very classrooms themselves.

From the participants' discussions, it would seem that in each city decentralization (including mainstreaming) was developed pragmatically rather than theoretically so the models differ. What works

in one school system in response to local conditions may work differently or not at all in another. Not surprisingly, therefore, a number of the conference participants were as interested in exploring the definitions of decentralization as its effects on special education.

An important question that surfaced during the discussions is which kind of decentralization is more conducive to initiating change, such as the establishment of mainstreaming, in the schools. Dr. Gittell supported the thesis that changes are best instituted at the grass roots level that is, at the decentralized district level. Thus, the schools in each district would make changes to accord with the educational needs and goals of the people in the district. Carrying this hypothesis a step further, it means that each decentralized school district could provide as much or as little special services for its handicapped children as it desired provided it observed the letter of the law for that school system.

Other participants in the conference opposed Dr. Gittell's thesis. They argued that unless change is initiated by a central office, school systems do not change. The proponents of this point of view concurred with Dr. Gittell that to make proposed changes operative, citizen support must be obtained, but they held that citizens are not knowledgeable enough to initiate changes and that some citizens are resistant to innovations or to innovations in certain directions. They argued also that at the very least the central officers are needed to create a structure and climate conducive to the initiation of change by citizens of the decentralized districts. Dr. Gittell countered these arguments with the notion that decentralized districts have the right to operate schools as they see fit providing they do not ignore legal requirements.

The discussion was not a mere academic exercise. It touches upon such questions as how special education will be provided in decentralized districts and how the right to education principle will be implemented. In Philadelphia and Detroit, the mainstreaming of exceptional children has been mandated by legislative enactment. Therefore, the decentralized school districts of those cities cannot circumvent the establishment of mainstreaming. Where the principle has been accepted by special education administrators without judicial or legislative mandates, the possibility exists that districts may choose to isolate handicapped children in self-contained classrooms instead of mainstreaming them. Such actions, of course, could lead to mandates.

Outside of Philadelphia and Detroit, the central offices of the school systems have retained all or most of the control of special education, even in those cities where the decentralization of regular education is fairly substantial. This situation raises the question of

whether the clients of special education are best served on a citywide or district basis. There is no question that children with some low-incidence handicaps, such as multiple problems, cannot be served locally because of inadequate resources and personnel. Children with mild handicaps can be mainstreamed. But the question becomes acute for those children whose handicaps place them between the profoundly and the mildly handicapped. A number of the conference participants strongly supported the centralization of all special education on the grounds that it is the only way to guarantee the delivery of optimal services to all handicapped children. Some participants predicted that the current decentralization of special education services would inevitably result in a demand for the return to centralization.

The format of the conference stressed the exchange of ideas, first between the invited speakers and the administrators, and second among the administrators themselves. Each main speaker was followed by a reaction panel of administrators and then by a general discussion.

The first presenter, Dr. Nystrand, ranged in his overview from the history of decentralization in the public schools to the influences leading to the current wave of decentralization. As a counterpoint to his generalizations, the reaction panel members discussed the development of decentralization in their respective cities and the effects of the decentralization on their administrations. One panel member, Dr. Alice Casey of Boston, was prevented by illness from submitting a written presentation for inclusion in this report. She had described the impact of decentralization on the Boston schools in which decentralization was considered a possible solution to some of the city's school problems; the concept, however, was not fully developed, which was one of the reasons that the effectiveness of decentralization in the system is so difficult to measure. The goals are set but the means to achieve them are not always provided. Considerable improvement in mainstreaming (called integration in Boston) is expected as a result of decentralization.

In addition to analyzing the results of the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education questionnaire, Dr. Gittell discussed concepts of decentralization and reported some findings from her research on the subject. Dr. Shedd concluded the major presentations with his paper on the problems to which attention must be given during the process of decentralization. Nash's paper was not read at the meeting but, rather, was used as background material. The Two-Cities survey was summarized by Miss Clark and Mr. Avery.

The papers prepared by the presenters were revised subsequent to the conference. Because the free discussions after each presentation

and reaction panel were sometimes repetitive and often included content not meant for general distribution, their main points have been summarized for this report.

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An Overview of Decentralization Theory and Process

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A characteristic of American education is that new ideas often emerge with great fanfare, are adopted uncritically and enthusiastically by a diverse group of advocates, and are implemented with such abandon that the original concept is ultimately vitiated by those who claim to espouse it. The most spectacular example was the rise and demise of progressive education. The same thing has happened in some ways to such concepts as accountability and decentralization. It seems to be our peculiar professional genius to take an idea and emasculate it while adopting it. That we have done this with decentralization is suggested by the title of a Nat Henthoff (1972) article discussing criticism of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville decentralization experiment in New York City, "Mugging a Corpse."

Altshuler (1970) provided a simple and generalizable definition of decentralization. "To decentralize means to distribute authority more widely—that is, to a greater number of individuals" (p. 64). To some educators, the concept means sharing authority previously vested in central office administrators with regional or building level administrators. To others, and to much of the interested public, decentralization means sharing authority with an expanded number of citizens. Altshuler referred to the latter as "political decentralization"; it "involves the transfer of authority to officials whose dependence is upon the sub-jurisdictional electorate or more narrowly, a sub-jurisdictional clientele" (p. 64). The popular label for this form of decentralization in education is community control.

The concept is not easily defined. A useful and fairly typical definition was prepared by the Five State Organizing Committee for Community Control (1971).

> The nature of the control we seek does not mean merely naming black people into administrative positions in the existing public school systems. Control must extend to the active members of the community for which the schools exist. The objectives of our concept of the control of the schools are four-fold:

1. Decision making in regard to the procedures and processes of education must be responsive to the community.
2. There must be organization for absolute administrative and fiscal control of the school.
3. The function of education must be redefined to make it responsive and accountable to the community.
4. Supporters must be committed to complete control of the educational goals as they relate to the larger goals of community development and self determination. (p. 6127)

Efforts to define decentralization must distinguish between administrative decentralization on the one hand, and political decentralization or community control on the other. Moreover, as Altshuler (1970) noted, community control is viewed most appropriately as a "continuum rather than an absolute" (p. 44). Thus, authority may be more or less decentralized in different locales and according to particular issues. Most complicating of all for people who are interested in the process is that some school districts that profess to have decentralization appear to share authority with citizens and others do not. In short, it is clear that school districts engage in a wide variety of practices that are labeled decentralization. The critical questions, if we are to understand and apply the practices, are, do these activities extend authority to sub-units within the system? and does this authority devolve to administrators or citizens at these levels?

To understand the issues involved in decentralization, it is helpful to review events in American education at the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, neighborhood schools were very much the norm, and big city school districts were governed by very large, lay boards of education which were elected on district or ward bases within the cities. When ward-dominated boards appeared to locate power in the hands of recent immigrants who could use it to preserve old-world values and identities while providing jobs for loyal and friendly compatriots, middle-class Americans took steps to centralize school control under the banner of progressive reform. Cronin (1973) noted that these reformers, "in the name of 'taking the schools out of politics' substituted their own brand of middle class politics by cancelling the arrangements for school government at the neighborhood level" (p. 11).

During the first two thirds of the twentieth century, the liberal tradition in American political thought emphasized the values of centralized decision making and professional expertise. Public education was an important arena for effecting these goals. Some areas of education were reputed to be so esoteric that only professional educators were capable of making decisions about them. The media and educators both focused considerable public attention on the professionaliza-

tion of teaching and on the purported capabilities of educational systems to resolve fundamental societal problems, if only the schools were given additional resources.

As school districts became larger, some schoolmen took a cue from institutions in the private sector and proposed administrative decentralization as a way of reducing the span of control and coping with internal bureaucratic problems. As early as 1938, the Educational Policies Commission declared,

> Centralized administration of education is likely to result in mediocrity and in the lack of local adaptability. Centralization in the control, administration, and financing of education is very apt to lead to a mediocre school system and a lack of progressive development of the program of public education. With well developed local units for the administration of schools it is certain that some communities will develop leadership which will be effective in improving education. . . . Most of the great reforms in education have originated in the schools of some local community. They were not decreed by some central authority. (Quoted in La Noue & Smith, 1973)

La Noue and Smith (1973) pointed out that although this statement was primarily a defense for small-town school districts, it prompted persons such as Paul Mort of Teachers' College, Columbia University, to think about the benefits of decentralizing city school systems. Subsequently, other scholars began to recognize the special educational problems associated with centralized school systems. For example, studies of Chicago noted the problem of centralizing curriculum services (Havighurst, 1964), and the central office officials' lack of control mechanisms to bring about compliance by persons working at the school-building level (Janowitz & Street, 1965). It was in such a context that a number of big-city school districts established supervising principals, subdistricts, and other intermediate administrative units during the 1950's and early 1960's.

Administrative decentralization was achieved without much fanfare or even public notice. However, the concept took on popular significance in the mid-1960's as a result of the debate over community control in New York City. Observers generally agree that the initial thrust for community control centered around the new IS 201 school in Harlem. When integration of the school did not materialize as expected, parents and other neighborhood leaders demanded neighborhood control of the school. This move corresponded with the emergence of Black Power ideology and it was received sympathetically by many school reformers in New York and elsewhere. It also came on the heels of a proposal to decentralize the entire school sys-

tem by boroughs (Gittell, 1967). Under great pressure, the New York City board of education established demonstration districts with local boards for IS 201 and the Two-Bridges and Ocean Hill-Brownsville areas. Further pressure for community control at the time came from an advisory panel, chaired by McGeorge Bundy of the Ford Foundation, which was appointed by Mayor Lindsay (Bundy et al., 1969).

Considerable ambiguity surrounded the creation of the demonstration districts, particularly with regard to the nature and extent of their authority. Matters came to a head, in 1968, when the Ocean Hill governing board took steps to remove 19 professional staff members from the district. The teachers' union countered with a long strike marked by volatility and bitterness by citizens and teachers (Gittell & Berube, 1969; Mayer, 1969). To many persons across the nation, the phrase "community control" came to symbolize the conflict associated with Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Through the intervention of the mayor, the state commissioner of education, and other influential persons, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle was finally ended but not forgotten.

The New York State Legislature that convened in 1969 was under great pressure to establish a new school decentralization law for New York City. Such a law was passed, but only with considerable difficulty. It provided for 30 to 33 school districts with elected boards that would have the right to select their own community superintendents. Local boards were given certain other specific powers, including a role in developing curriculum and selecting textbooks, preparing budget requests and administering certain special funds, controlling a maintenance budget of up to $250,000 per year, selecting paraprofessionals, and instituting requests for disciplinary procedures or transfers of unwanted personnel (*Fleischmann Report*, 1973, pp. 105ff.). However, the new law was not without ambiguities and its implementation has been marked by confusion as well as continuing conflict. Moreover, the law did not apply to high schools, and it retained in the central board control of fundamental policy making and administration of capital funds and personnel measures.

Decentralization, or community control, as it was implemented in New York City, has taken some authority from system central office administrators and placed it with the community boards and superintendents. Some of these community superintendents, however, perceive their authority as being quite limited (Bard, 1972); some have been caught in a cross fire between community interests and the power of a strong union concerned with job security. The conflict in this relationship was noted by Bard (1972), who wrote about two of the key actors as follows:

> While Al Shanker complains of community boards making "a huge patronage pie" out of their domains and manufacturing thousands of "Mickey Mouse jobs" for the faithful, one of his chief antagonists, Andrew G. Donaldson, the black superintendent of District 9, says the UFT's policies have "created an anti-teacher kind of movement among the populace where a teacher is regarded as a grubby, grafty person who wants to get more money and less work." (p. 242)

One other state and city have achieved the necessary legislation to extend formal authority to decentralized community boards. The press for community control in Detroit emerged from the efforts of a number of black citizens and a study commission report that called for both administrative decentralization and increased citizen participation. State Senator Coleman Young, the recently elected mayor of Detroit, in 1969 presented a bill to the legislature that called for decentralization; it was passed with little debate (Grant, 1971). The bill, however, was quite general; it ordered subsequent study and determination of the details of how many regional boards were to be created and what powers they were to have. Efforts to resolve these questions became entangled with the desegregation issue in Detroit. Together, they sparked heated controversy, including a recall election that deposed four incumbent board members who had supported the proposed decentralization-desegregation plan. As ultimately drawn, decentralization in Detroit calls for eight regional school districts with elected boards of five members; the chief vote getter in each area is a member of the central board along with five at-large members. To this point, the relative powers of the central and community boards remain somewhat ambiguous. The fundamental issues in Detroit, since decentralization, have been citywide. They have concerned contract negotiations, fiscal solvency, and desegregation. Problems in these areas have dominated the agendas of school officials and limited the opportunities for regional boards to assert prerogatives. Another emerging problem in Detroit is the clarification of the roles of regional administrators who must relate to both a regional board and a centralized administrative structure.

The events described thus far beg the question of why the movement for community control or political decentralization began. Several factors can be noted. The first and perhaps most pervasive was frustration with the inability of urban schools to serve many of their constituents as parents and other citizens believed they should. Appropriately or otherwise, educators and other people had led city residents in general and ghetto dwellers in particular to believe that education leads to upward mobility and greater societal rewards. Al-

though more funds became available to schools and citizens became more vigilant in monitoring school programs, neither the money nor concern seemed to have the desired impact on the education of children and their life opportunities. Community frustration sometimes mounted to the point that neighborhood residents demanded that they be allowed to govern the schools themselves.

Related, but not always identical to the aforementioned frustration, was the fact that some persons sought control of the schools as bases for power and political autonomy. In the mid-1960's, black leaders began to realize that racism had "created the conditions for effective black political organization" (Skolnick, 1969, p. 160). Insofar as blacks were clustered geographically, they had the requisite numbers to control their institutions and to direct them in ways which they would define. Some black leaders envisioned political control of institutions as a prerequisite to successful integration. For example, Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) articulated a rationale that has influenced many supporters of community control. In their words,

> Before a group can enter the open society it must first close ranks. By this we mean that group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society. Traditionally each new ethnic group in the society has found the route to social and political viability through the organization of its own institutions with which to represent its needs within the larger society. (Quoted in Skolnick, 1969, p. 161)

A third reason for supporting such school reorganization is to achieve reduction of the impersonality and unresponsiveness inherent in large-scale bureaucracies. Many citizens, particularly those who have had relatively short or unsuccessful careers in school themselves, are perplexed by tables of organization and intimidated by professionals with extensive vocabularies. Thus, the argument runs, these persons would be more comfortable in dealing with the schools if they could do it through friends and neighbors who have some authority at the community level. The unresponsiveness argument also has another side. Sub-units (i.e., buildings) of large city school systems can be unresponsive to the directives of a central board of education or superintendent as well as to local citizens. Thus community control is urged as a means of bringing the schools into closer contact with citizens and increasing their accountability to local residents.

A fourth rationale for community control rests on the assumption that such reorganization will facilitate changes that improve student performance. The basis of the assumption is that student performance will improve because something else will happen. This argument generally assumes that one or more of the following will occur: (a) Student

performance will improve because parental participation will increase and children learn faster when their parents are involved and sharing an experience with them, or (b) student performance will improve because professionals will be held more accountable to school clients, or (c) student performance will improve because it will come under the coordinated attention of the entire learning community.

A fifth rationale for community control is that it can enhance the number of available educational alternatives. The argument is similar to that advanced for the role of the states in a federal system. Acknowledging that no system of education is perfect, it holds that the diversity of practices which would be encouraged through community control has the potential of suggesting beneficial changes which could be adopted in other areas. A somewhat different perspective begins with the acknowledgement of considerable diversity among the values of citizens with regard to what and how schools should teach. Community control could therefore provide a safety valve that would allow individual neighborhoods to fashion schools according to their own values.

Whatever the merits of the foregoing arguments, it is apparent that community control has not achieved widespread popularity. Only New York and Detroit have duly authorized community boards, and these were achieved only in the wake of considerable struggling and acrimonious debate. Few cities seem eager to replicate these conditions. Moreover, the results have been disappointing to decentralization advocates. For example, appearing before the Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, Bernard Watson of Temple University noted the earlier disappointment citizens experienced in calling for community involvement. He pointed out,

> So the demands went beyond involvement and became those of decentralization and community control. The rub is that these two are meaningless unless decision making and financial power are transferred and because that is almost never done we have been treated more than once to the sorry spectacle of community groups fighting among themselves for crumbs and bare bones. The 'crusade' becomes a power struggle not a serious attempt to move responsibility for education closer to the people whose children inhabit the schools. (*Hearings*, 1971, p. 5915)

I believe that there are at least two important reasons that we are not likely to see many more cities move in the direction of New York and Detroit in the near future. The first is what appears to be the strong opposition of teachers' associations to such a move. The escalation of lay-professional tensions has been one of the dominant themes in educational politics over the past decade. As noted earlier, events

surrounding decentralization, particularly in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and, more recently, in Detroit over the matter of accountability, have exacerbated this cleavage. Moreover, the problem of job security in the face of declining student enrollments, fiscal shortages, and citizen demands for an increase in the number of minority teachers and administrators make it seem unlikely that the associations will reverse themselves on this issue. Needless to say, the power of the teachers' associations has been amply demonstrated in most cities which would be candidates for such reorganization, and the indications are that this power is probably increasing.

The other side of the coin is that advocacy of any sort for community control is minimal at the present time. La Noue and Smith (1973) observed that "the coalition that supported the movement was more fragile than appeared to early observers" (p. 236). The issue seems to have much less appeal to political figures than it once did, and many community leaders who supported early measures were financed by community action agencies or foundation grants which have been discontinued. Moreover, citizen interest in school affairs has traditionally been ephemeral and focused on local and particular remedies. As the national media emphasized the problems of Detroit and New York, the enthusiasm of citizens elsewhere was no doubt dampened. For some, particularly white liberals, decentralization was but a phase they passed through on the way to advocacy of a new panacea, such as open classrooms.

Despite the limited implementation of community control, per se, it would be an error to conclude that its advocacy has had little impact upon the schools. Its presence has been felt in two ways:

1. Advocacy of community control has hastened the advent of administrative decentralization. Ornstein (1973) recently surveyed 65 large school districts and found that most had taken steps toward administrative decentralization, the majority of them since 1967. Although it is impossible to prove the point, it seems plausible that some of these actions were at least partially an effort to defuse pressure for local community control experiments. When asked about the possibility of community control mechanisms in their districts, school board members and administrators have been in a position to say, "No, we don't believe in community control (often citing the most disruptive of the New York City events) but we are working toward decentralization." In addition, some form of citizen participation or involvement generally accompanies local decentralization plans. Only three of the 65 school districts surveyed by Ornstein (1973) indicated that they do not have some kind of citizen participation mechanism.

The controversy surrounding the community control experiments apparently stimulated school people to establish a variety of advisory committees and other participatory mechanisms. Without going into each of the cities, however, it is very difficult to determine what the citizen participation entails. The question to ask is, "What do they do and how satisfactory are they?" At the height of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville controversy, I took part in a study requested by the National Urban Coalition (Cunningham & Nystrand, 1968) to report on promising mechanisms for involving citizens in school affairs. A study team visited 13 cities to search out mechanisms that exhibited the potential to effect citizen-initiated and/or endorsed changes in the school system. We found in the cities we visited that school people and citizens alike were very much aware of the rhetoric of citizen involvement and sometimes they were modeling their behavior after what they had heard of citizen-school relations in other locales. A grapevine effect may have been at work as most of the advisory committees and other mechanisms we studied were newly established. In some cases, they were created through citizen initiatives; in others, they were designed by school officials. Some reflected an adversary quality among participants and others were characterized by candor and cooperation.

It would be interesting to follow up on that study now that five years have passed. I know that some of the mechanisms considered promising in 1968 no longer exist. I wonder why. I also wonder what has happened to the others. At the same time, it is apparent that many more school districts have involved citizens more extensively than ever before. For example, it is no longer uncommon for local citizens to be involved in the selection of principals for neighborhood schools.

2. The prominence given to the community control issue has led to an expanded sense of citizen participation by the public. In the absence of enabling legislation, school board policies, or administrative directives, citizens in many communities have taken the initiative in confronting school officials about matters of consequence to them. Increasingly, such efforts are directed not at central boards of education but at the local neighborhood school which the citizens want to change. As a consequence, the principalship has become a much more embattled position in American education than it used to be. Feeling that their suburban neighbors have a much greater say about what occurs in their relatively small school districts, urban residents have shown increased willingness to confront local principals on a range of issues. Citizens have forced the resignation or transfer of countless numbers of principals through such confrontations in recent years. In

this very real sense, de facto community control has emerged in the absence of enabling statutes and formal restructurings.

To this point, I have reviewed the development of the community control and decentralization rationale. The current situation is characterized by two rather limited experiments in political decentralization or community control (New York and Detroit), widespread administrative decentralization that varies in form and substance from city to city, and the acknowledgement by many school officials and laymen of a growing citizen role in school affairs. When formalized, this participation is virtually always of an advisory nature. In practice, however, it is often rather assertive and controlling on some issues. As we look to the future, these conditions pose several questions about school-community and administrative relations.

The first of these is the classic, sociological question, what constitutes a community? Can a community be defined by drawing lines around school attendance areas of equal sizes? Assuming that a school or cluster of schools is established as a "community," one must ask about that community's ability to educate itself as well as about its rights and responsibilities to other community areas. On the issue of self-educability, the press for decentralization contrasts with the recent equal opportunity litigation involving school finance. Insofar as we move toward increased decentralization, there is need for concern that fiscal resources, which are distributed unequally across cities as well as states, be provided in a manner consistent with educational need. In the long run, this problem is more complex than just distributing tax dollars. We are increasingly aware that education and schooling are not synonomous, and it is common to predict that students will receive increasing portions of their education in the community-at-large rather than in the school. Here again, we must ask what constitutes a community, and the extent to which emphasis upon decentralization could limit the educational resources available to students in particular neighborhoods. A related question is about the extent to which the broader community is willing to allow neighborhoods to emphasize local values in schooling. The reality of external controls in such matters was noted in one midwestern city recently. Central school officials vetoed the proposed display of the Black Nationalist flag at a local high school after the faculty had voted to do so as a means of responding to student concerns.

Second, the process of decentralization and the acknowledgement that communities may have different values and educational programs poses the possibility of competition among them. It is conceivable, for example, that families may move from one neighborhood to another because the latter offers an educational program more to their liking.

In addition, the various neighborhood or regional districts almost inevitably will compete among themselves for resources which are available from the central board of education. Just as decentralization is a political process that involves the distribution of power within neighborhoods, so it will also produce political contests among them. Thus, an area administrator will be confronted with the need to examine his own political strengths and inclinations.

A third issue relates to the effectiveness of decentralization as a governmental form. Banfield and Wilson (1963) have described governmental functions as the providing of services which are otherwise not available and the managing of conflict. Would decentralization improve services or reduce conflict? If student achievement is taken as the measure of service, a hasty response would be "No" to both parts of the question. First, we lack evidence of improved student achievement in decentralized settings and second, the early decentralization experiments produced some of education's most spectacular conflicts.

It can be argued, on the other hand, that decentralization has never been implemented sufficiently to provide an adequate test of the concept, and that much of the more recent citizen involvement has defused potentially damaging conflicts. In addition, Altshuler (1970) asked the question in a special form that requires further reflection.

> Would community control be conducive to the development of black skills and incomes and to the improvement of other conditions in the ghetto? (p. 207)

Admitting that the question is complex, his answer is a cautious but positive one. It emphasizes

> . . . providing an adequate outlet for racial pluralism . . . improving the ghettos by transforming their spirit [rather] than by inundating them with paternalistic programs. (pp. 207 ff.)

A fourth issue relates to the powers and functions of an urban school system which are to be centralized and those which are to be decentralized. With respect to special education, this issue, I think, relates to its functions as well as to the area as a whole. I have already indicated my view that resource aggregation needs to be centralized. In fact, it seems likely that the courts would not permit otherwise. In an earlier publication, Luvern Cunningham and I (Nystrand & Cunningham, 1970) discussed the functions that we thought could best be centralized, decentralized, and shared. Since we wrote that chapter, many cities have taken varying steps toward decentralization. It appears that the extent of decentralization and the functional areas in

which it occurs vary from city to city according to existing conditions and the political strengths and preferences of local actors.

A fifth issue deals with the changing relationships between laymen and educational professionals. The press for decentralization emerged, at least partially, as a result of tensions between the two groups, and these tensions seem to be increasing in many cities. Clients feel that the schools are costly and unproductive; educators, on the other hand, feel that citizens want to displace them. These feelings may be the product of social distance and ambiguity about school purposes and the means of achieving them. If decentralization is to rectify rather than compound these problems, it must bring about new working relationships in which educators can feel less defensive and citizens more involved in the process of education. The process is formidable because it necessitates educating ourselves as well as others. If the new working relationships were to occur, it would not be the first time that changes in formal requirements and behavior preceded shifts in attitudes.

I will venture some more specific observations about the implications of these issues for special education. The first and most obvious relates to the question of which special programs can, should, and will be decentralized. Again, I suspect that local political exigencies are influential in determining the outcome. Assuming a perfectly rational world, however, it would seem that economies of scale would call for the centralization of low-incidence programs. On the other hand, programs for the educable mentally retarded and others of relatively high incidence could be more readily decentralized in deference to the values of participation and local determination.

Second, I would anticipate that decentralization may provide special educators with new and more effective allies in their efforts to mainstream mildly handicapped children. Many city parents have been among the most aggressive advocates of mainstreaming. Their efforts, however, have been hindered by the difficulty of dealing with complex, bureaucratic school systems. Indeed, sometimes they have gone around these systems to seek relief from the courts. Decentralization, perhaps, will give them more ready access to building and neighborhood officials who theoretically will be more responsive to them. Moreover, because residential patterns tend to cluster not only children identified as mildly handicapped (e.g., educable mentally retarded) but also their parents in particular areas of the city, these citizen supporters of mainstreaming should have considerable strength in numbers.

On the other hand, non-special teachers and administrators will be the more exposed to this citizen pressure for mainstreaming. It is

possible that over time they will develop closer relationships with local children and parents which will help them to appreciate the uniqueness of special children and to look more favorably upon mainstreaming. Indeed, this change in relationships is part of the theory of decentralization. In the short run, however, it seems likely that many teachers will react to increased citizen pressure by appealing to the special educators as experts who can help them resist mainstreaming. They will count upon you to explain to parents in your best professional tones why their children should be kept out of regular classrooms. Thus, you are likely to be placed squarely between neighborhood citizens and your colleagues. In addition to educating regular teachers and others about issues such as mainstreaming, it may be helpful also to provide them with inducements to work with children who pose special problems. These might include first calling upon teacher aides in the building, supplying special materials and opportunities for inservice education and consultant services, and helping with individualized instruction for all pupils. I suspect that if we move in this way it will have substantial implications for the way special education is financed in the future.

A fourth observation is that decentralization is likely to involve special educators in new relationships with new constituents. If programs are decentralized, the citywide constituencies which have been dominated by white, middle-class parents may be weakened, that is, they will no longer be able to make an impact at the local level. Even if they continue in strength, however, new groups will probably form on area or neighborhood bases, and they may not be so white and middle class. It would seem wise for special educators to meet with and perhaps even help to organize such groups. Alternatively, special educators may well take the initiative in meeting with community advisory bodies to explain programs and enlist their support.

Decentralization is also likely to involve special educators in new relationships with individual parents, particularly in areas where community groups and individuals insist upon greater school accountability. In particular, many parents have felt uninvolved in placement decisions made within the bureaucracy. In some cases, they have gone to court to assure their involvement and the accountability of school personnel. Decentralization may accelerate pressures for making these decisions at the building level. A possible basis for such relationships was suggested by Gallagher (1972). He proposed that mildly handicapped children be placed in school programs on the basis of two-year contracts between special educators, regular educators, and parents.

Finally, I believe that we must accept the reality of the pluralistic and self-determination aspects of the belief system of decentralization.

As already stated, acceptance requires that we work with lay citizens more extensively than we have in the past and that we be mindful of how we use our expertise. I believe that if we are going to be realistic, we will have to reappraise the nature of our expertise and get a little better grasp on its boundaries. Our expertise should be a resource to achieve community objectives rather than a rationale to preserve the status quo. Acceptance of pluralism and self-determination also means efforts to change the nature of our profession. In particular, it calls for increased efforts to recruit and prepare minority-group persons for teaching and leadership roles in special education as well as in other fields.

Some persons view decentralization as a panacea for urban education; others feel it holds the prospect for educational ruin. Neither view seems likely to dominate, particularly in view of the diverse manner in which the concept has been implemented. Nevertheless, we have seen that decentralization is likely to produce some changes in organizational and school-community relations. In my judgment, these changes provide opportunities for special educators to establish closer relationships with both laymen and other educators in pursuit of greater individualization and educational benefits for all children.

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Reaction Panel

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Decentralization means different things to different people. I could speak about decentralization solely in terms of how it affects me in my position as head of curriculum and educational research; or I could react to Dr. Nystrand's comments from the perspective of a region superintendent, region board member, central board member, or central staff member. Each point of view would be different. Instead, I shall try to describe the decentralization in Detroit from as objective a stance as I can.

Let me impress upon you at the outset that decentralization was not brought about in Detroit by the Detroit Board of Education or the school system staff. It was mandated by the Michigan Legislature about four years ago. The superintendent and staff had the responsibility of implementation. With about six months advance notice allowed in the Act, we started preparing for decentralization early in the summer of 1969. The city was divided into eight regions, each consisting of from 30,000 to 40,000 students, with certain vocational, technical, and special education schools comprising a so-called "ninth region" under centralized administrative authority. Each of the eight regions is governed by five board members, the chairman serving as one of the members of the central board as well.

Special education was not decentralized; it remained under the authority of the central board. Special education supervisors are still under my jurisdiction and they still operate as they have in the past. If anything, special education is more centralized now than it was in the past as most people favor it but do not want it in their schools. Under decentralization, this attitude has become more political than ever before. For example, just about the time decentralization came into effect, we were awarded a grant of some $2.4 million to set up a special education rehabilitation center. To establish it, we had to have a region board agree to provide a school to house it, a provision we could not obtain. It took us two years to have a "ninth region" special education school designated where we could utilize this $2.4 million grant. As this example indicates, the community and region board have considerable control under decentralization.

Since decentralization, the central board has been increased from 7 to 13 members; 5 members are elected centrally and 8 are elected as chairmen of region boards. Initially, community interest and involvement in the region boards were very high but they have fallen off. In the first election, 283 candidates filed for region boards; this past November, when the initial three-year terms were coming to an end, only 40 candidates filed for region boards. In some regions, individuals had to be urged to file so that there would be sufficient names on the ballot. It should be noted that these are paying positions: Each member receives $35.00 for each meeting attended. The region boards and central board meet every two weeks. The region board members who sit on the central board have to change their "hats" for central board meetings, and they have to change them very fast. As a result, new policies have been created very, very slowly, and many complex political issues have arisen.

Let me give you an example. A community group qualified for some OEO money. The region board had had nothing to do with the proposal—as a matter of fact, the community group had no rapport with the board whatsoever—and the region board would have nothing to do with the dispensing of the funds. The Chicago office of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), however, demanded the signature of "a board of education" as a prerequisite to approval, but the region refused to sign. The community group then brought the matter to the central board and the central board, by one vote, authorized the grant. You can understand the effect of this action on the region board authority.

For the last two years, region boards have demanded that they become part of the central board, which would increase the membership of the latter to 45 and make it unwieldy. The request, needless to say, has not been granted. Region boards continue to feel that they do not have the voice in educational policy that they should have.

The limitations on the region boards were set by the legislature. They have no legal status. The legislature made the central board the only legal body so all grants and major policy decisions must go through the central board. Thus, very few policy issues are solved at region board levels unless they pertain only to the region involved. The legislature also gave the central board control over the budgets and finances, a very difficult responsibility because the numbers of students and teachers within the regions are disproportionate. If you ask me how decentralization is working financially, I would have to respond that we now have a $9 million deficit. I would add that there is a great deal of concern at the present time over whether we can afford decentralization and whether it is providing for equal educa-

tional opportunities or higher achievement for the students. However, we are still in the adjustment period.

Although the legislature mandated that we decentralize, they gave us no additional financial aids to meet the cost of decentralizing. The contract dispute with the teachers is now in binding arbitration before a three-man board: one man appointed by the schools, one by the bargaining unit, and one a public member. Hearings began in December 1973 and the decision came in late April.

Almost every region board is demanding teacher accountability. The teacher bargaining unit is vehemently opposed to the concept. Some region boards also want written into the contract the requirement that teachers reside in Detroit. Now, many of our teachers live in peripheral areas.

Region boards cannot transfer teachers but they can dismiss them. When dismissed, contract teachers go into the eligibility pool and are reassigned. A number of principals are also in the eligibility pool because they were dismissed, not from their contracts but from their school posts, for a variety of reasons, including the balance of staff concept.

In each region we now have a business administrator, a grant fund director, a personnel director, and others, totaling some 16 positions in all, exclusive of the region board members. This personnel support requires additional money for operation. Decentralization has been expensive but, in its favor, it involves greater participation from citizen advisory committees, citizen groups, and parents. Parent interest has increased considerably, mostly in the belief that decentralization means community control. I do not think it does but the parents believe it. Some of the parents feel very frustrated, however, as in the example of the OEO grant mentioned earlier.

Decentralization has had little effect on student achievement. No statistically significant improvements in test results have been found over the four years that decentralization has been in existence. We have set up a Superintendent's Committee on Achievement, and we have distributed some $270,000 to the regions so they can attempt to improve pupil achievement through teacher inservice training.

Harold W. Perry
Memphis, Tennessee

When the Memphis City School System decentralized four years ago, with the exception of special education and vocational education,

special education was not ready for decentralization. The main reason, I believe, was that the people who were going into the four geographic areas as administrators were convinced that we did not have enough special education personnel to administer and supervise programs and provide adequate services on a decentralized basis.

I strongly advocate community involvement. It is essential and desirable in special education. Any success or progress that special education may enjoy today is a result of the involvement and contributions of different disciplines, agencies, talents, and community involvement. Community involvement in an advisory capacity can be effective, but it seems to me that we are not using citizen advisory groups very effectively.

In my mind, our main concern today is what is called mainstreaming or integration. We have mandatory legislation in the State of Tennessee on the Right to Education, which was passed in 1972. One of the by-products of mainstreaming, I believe, will be to put more and more decision making back into the local school level, and the result eventually will be decentralization.

With the 17 consultants on my staff, we could carry out an effective program of decentralization at the present time. I feel, however, that in the long run mainstreaming and the kinds of decision making relating to it—the placing of the welfare of all youngsters above all else—will be a good, necessary, and healthy step to decentralization.

I also have to state that I am very much in favor of decentralization, especially if it will decentralize some of the anxieties and agonies that we administrators experience in handling problems.

Presently, one of the biggest obstacles facing us is the attitude of some school personnel. Some principals are still adhering to the self-contained classroom philosophy and some teachers are saying, "Get this child out of my room and I can teach." This attitudinal problem must be dealt with before we can expect to realize many constructive steps toward mainstreaming and decentralization. We have been mainstreaming for a number of years and we have had resource teachers, consulting teachers, and so many specialists that it is even difficult to keep track of their job descriptions/duties, and so forth. We have people, pupils, and teachers coming out of classrooms and going into classrooms. Still, the primary problem is the attitudes of regular teachers and even special educators; we still have special educators and classroom teachers who feel that they do not want any part of mainstreaming. I hope to live to see the day, and I am sure many of you agree with me, when the term "special" no longer exists and we are serving the needs of all youngsters, without labels, when the label of special or exceptional will no longer exist.

Locally, we are attempting to work at this mainstreaming matter —and decentralization—through a principal orientation program. I am one of those fortunate few administrators who was recently invited to attend a program relating to mainstreaming in the promised land—Austin, Texas. I shared what I had learned and observed with our superintendent and his reaction was most positive—positive to the point of providing funds to develop the necessary materials (slides, etc.) to initiate our own Principals' Training Program. We are hoping to change some attitudes and to integrate more exceptional children into regular school programs; but one of our problems still relates to the principal who provides the leadership in solving "pupil problems" and makes an appropriate decision on which youngsters should be "served" in what ways, to what extent, and so forth, at the local school level.

Decentralization does not rank first on my priority list. Instead, I am more concerned about attempting to minimize the labels to which we have been accustomed. It is true that we have used these labels very effectively to get tax dollars and, perhaps more effectively, to get specific laws passed. We have also used the same labels most effectively to motivate parents to channel their energies constructively and to get politicians to move in right directions. Now, however, I think the labels are passe. We need to be more concerned about riding the pendulum back, riding it back to a central spot and slowing it down there so that we can mainstream these children and get them back where they belong in regular programs instead of in sometimes sterile, self-contained EMH, EMR, and other such classrooms.

I think decentralization *will* come about, but I do not think it will come about with all the fanfare and labels that we know today. I think it will come about through a process of osmosis, as a by-product of plain speaking and of special educators' doing their job in educating children.

Summary of Discussion

Question: To what can the decline of citizen interest in decentralized region boards be attributed?

Answer: On the basis of personal impressions, one can see the decline as the result of several factors: (a) The initial enthusiasm for positions on the boards may have stemmed from desires for *community prestige rather than interest in the schools. (b) Region* boards are not financially independent. Since state and federal regulations require that region board requests for grants be channeled through the central office, in a sense, the central administration controls the region boards' access to funding.

Question: Are decentralization and centralization cyclical phenomena?

Answer: The nation is tending toward centralization. Twenty-five years ago, there were more than 30,000 school districts in the country; today the number is less than 20,000. The trend toward consolidation of school districts seems to be continuing. More and more of the funding for public education is coming from state and federal coffers rather than local property taxes. Furthermore, trends toward centralization can be seen in other aspects of national life, such as the energy crisis and health and welfare problems. Thus, decentralization in the schools may be a temporary phenomenon.

Some citizens and educators believe that meaningful change in the schools will come first and most significantly at the school-building level. They believe that when committed administrators, teachers, pupils, and community people come together at the grass-roots level they can work toward common solutions.

Opposed to these proponents of decentralization are other forces for centralization: (a) Future legal decisions which may make decentralization more difficult but not impossible and (b) teacher associations, which are a very conservative force. A lot of what happens to decentralization in the future may depend on the extent to which parents and other citizens are involved in educational issues.

Judicial decisions and mandatory state legislation are pushing us toward decentralization in terms of community as well as administrative decisions. If local school personnel are given the responsibility for children—exceptional as well as non-handicapped—they will demand the right to make decisions about what they do with the children.

However, decentralization may result in the regions' cutting back on essential services which affect state aid and, consequently, in a concern for reinstituting those services through centralization.

Observation: Our discussion of decentralization does not touch on how we tie responsibility and accountability to it. If the court tells us that so many teachers must serve so many children, or that needs of handicapped pupils must be met, and the community says "no" through the decentralized program, there is an immediate conflict. The conflict exists even without decentralization.

Observation: When we had special schools because local schools lacked special education programs, we were taking the kids away from their communities. However, it is regular education, particularly in larger cities, which has decentralized.

Response: Is the community school back? As I understand the term, one referent is a school located in the neighborhood which is attended by all the kids living there. It was the old melting pot idea: different kinds of kids living in the same neighborhood ought to go to school together so they will get along with one another. Now, however, our communities look a little different and people are saying that community schools are very important and we must keep the kids in their schools, and so forth.

I have trouble understanding someone who would push the community school—I have to be careful here—as a particular kind of prescribed program in which all the folks in the neighborhood come in and do the things we plan for them. I have seen described as a community school, too, one in which community residents have much less to say about what it is they are going to do. But they do have some options; they can come and take classes in the evenings and sit about. A third definition of a community school, the kind that evolves out of the community control ideology, is that the people of the community feel some ownership for the school. They feel that they can go to the school and influence what is going to happen. They feel a sense of pride in the school. They feel that the people who work for the school are, in fact, concerned about their welfare and are interacting with them on purposes and future directions of the school. I think that a lot of schools approach that.

To take the point a little further, if you talk about crosstown busing there is, undoubtedly, some conflict between any one of these definitions of a community school and a system that forces kids to go to schools long distances from their home. If we are going to talk about community, it must be in a functional kind of way. You could make the argument that parents can relate to a school although it may

be 10-12 miles away—at least we could have made that argument before the energy crisis—just about as well as they can relate to the school down the street.

It is important to note that if we advocate decentralization, community involvement or control, or whichever term you want for communities that shape the direction of the schools, we are, in fact, advocating diversity. We are telling the people of all communities that to a great extent they can make the school into what they want to. And that means that they can make what we might perceive as mistakes.

The test of leadership, to come back to a comment made earlier, is whether we can take the ideas we have and present them in such a way that they stand the test of public acceptance in those communities. Our ideas and the things that we propose for schools will have to be accepted on their merits by the people in the community, as opposed to bringing in ideas and things, setting them down, and saying that this is what the program is going to be.

Observation: In one inner-city situation, the involvement of parents and community people with a school meant that the school moved ahead. Instruction and the quality of education for the children improved.

Now, some of our goals for special education may not be understood by the people out in the field and the community. They will not have the zeal to implement these programs because they do not understand them. Our main struggle as special educators at this point, in structuring an inner-city situation, is to become most effective and to change our roles in such a way that we can relate to the principals, teachers, parents, and community people in that community school situation, so they will adopt some of our more progressive ideas to help individual children with handicapping positions to be better educated. This role is a new one for us. I think it is what this conference probably needs to be about. What is the new role of the special educator and special education in the decentralized situation?

Response: If we do not provide the leadership at this time, litigation and legislation will see to it that the changes will be made. That is a sort of a threat but I mean more than that: We have a golden opportunity to provide some leadership.

Community involvement can occur in a much larger school and its geographic area with the proper guidance and leadership.

Reynolds: A national survey by the CEC might be mentioned here. The survey involved state and city directors of special education, state directors of teacher certification, a large number of regular classroom teachers, and a large number of special educators, and others. The analysis was made by groups. One of the clear findings

was that regular classroom teachers expect specialists to go right on taking care of handicapped youngsters. In fact, the regular classroom teachers predicted that, in the future, the number and kinds of special certificates issued by state departments would increase from the present average of about 7 to 8, 9, and even 10. While the leaders in special education are saying that the number of certified specializations must come down very quickly to 3 or 4, the teachers make a different prediction. This finding accords with Dr. Nystrand's admonitions that we should press for more accommodative positions in the school building and for people who can become flak-catchers.

Question: Are innovation and change in special education going to come about through the power of decentralization or through special educators in the central office who have the most understanding of progressive trends and methods for improving special education?

Answer: When the power to make decisions and implement services is close to the children, parents, and community, the result is stronger actions, better schools, and better instruction. However, the central office must provide leadership to help communities understand and interpret judicial and legislative mandates to develop people's interests in special education, integration, and mainstreaming. The stimulation for innovation and change must come from the central office special educators and it must be transmitted to the schools.

Although change cannot come from the central office the ideas for change must come from it. For example, in Pennsylvania, special educators were the only ones who had the expertise and zeal to initiate the programs to implement the right to education mandate. Necessarily, they became the controlling group.

In Brooklyn, where the school system is decentralized except for special education, the community is involved in a three-part partnership: (a) the community school district, represented by community school board members, the superintendent, and parents of non-handicapped children; (b) the parents of handicapped children; and (c) what is called the OSEP staff (Office of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services). The mechanism is the workshop, which is called Parents in Partnership. Parents of non-handicapped children are working with the parents of the handicapped now without the competition and divisiveness that might have occurred during the first year of decentralization.

It is a mistake to assume that centralization and decentralization are mutually exclusive. A series of federal programs such as OEO and revenue sharing show that decentralization can be an output of the centralization. Both can exist at the same time and they can feed each

other. In general, we are currently in a period of decentralization. In the health fields and city government, for example, the movement toward decentralization is greater than in the schools. A very real problem in the evaluation of decentralization is that there has been no long-range experience with it. No longitudinal studies have been possible. Consequently, even Dr. Gittell's research, which shows that innovation is an output of decentralization, must be considered in relation to the limited experience.

Observation: From our experience and from what I know of the literature and technology of change, change very rarely emanates from the grass roots unless it is a well-organized movement. It has to come from the top. If it is to take hold, superintendents, board members, and people in positions of responsibility must agree on the concept of change and on the rationale of the program to implement it. And that, in some way, must be combined with the involvement, interest, and support of people in the community. What happens in the local school building comes about because of a very concerted effort by the administration and not as a result of some community involvement. A program for change needs to be reinforced in all its aspects from the provision of materials to the provision of necessary specialists and support help, which can only be done from the top.

I see changes in the regular classroom and in special education as springing from concepts which are initiated by the very powerful organization at the top. You cannot change special education apart from the main system, so a systems approach is necessary. You have to look at all the variables, subsystems, supporting systems, and enabling systems, whatever you want to call them, and when it becomes necessary to change that enabling system you must have the power, the resources, and the control to do so. The central office must control the evaluation of principals and teachers, for example, to find out whether in fact that principal and those teachers are meeting certain objectives for the staff.

It is difficult to see how substantive kinds of changes in education are going to come about from the bottom up. Change requires cooperation, of course, but, also reinforcements which must be controlled if the results are not to be haphazard. For the most part, our school systems are so large, so immobile, so involved in maintaining the status quo, so unresponsive to movement, that a program for change will cause many kinds of flak.

We conditioned the whole education system for years to identify handicapped children and to push them aside into a sub- or parallel system. Principals are conditioned to that attitude and to thinking that

they cannot handle exceptional children. Teachers are conditioned to think that they cannot teach them. Universities have done very little to teach teachers that they can handle a large degree of variance in their classrooms. We have to change those attitudes. Thus, principals and teachers must be retrained. But retraining will fail unless the support system is built to carry it along and there is an evaluation system to show the school personnel whether the objectives are being reached.

Question: Are decentralization and mainstreaming incompatible? If the decision to mainstream is made by the central authority and superimposed on the community, is it incompatible with the notion of grass-roots people making the decisions on what they want to do?

Response: I see very little evidence of systems change coming about from grass-roots decisions. We have all seen the fine development of particular school projects that involved a certain group of local people who were interested and informed. But I do not see such changes taking hold in total systems without a very strong thrust coming from the central level office. To bring about system change, you must start at the top and involve the community—you are constantly involving the community—but schools can be changed without the community.

Observation: We have voiced the conviction that the community should be involved in changing the schools and I think that we are contradicting ourselves when we talk about making a decision to mainstream schools at the central level. First, you have to find out what the community needs, and you find that out by involving yourself with the community; then, from the bank of educational theory, you take what serves the needs of that community and you involve the community in developing it. Special education should be centrally administered but you have to find out what each community needs and work on developing it. It is good that it comes out this way, because at most of our meetings we always seem to assume that universal mainstreaming is what we have to do now.

Reynolds: At this point, we should take cognizance of the judicial directives which have changed the ball game. For example, the Pennsylvania Consent Decree said, in effect, that children shall be educated in the least restrictive environment, which means that the educator carries a special burden to justify any displacement from the normal school community. The decree also referred to the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution to support the right of children to be educated in the mainstream; administrators are required to justify any

displacement from it case by case. It seems to me that a central administrator is not arrogant when he orders a change in the schools to comply with judicial interpretations.

Observation: The system organization should not be autocratic. In Texas, there is an advisory committee of 250 people for the special education unit and it is broken down to small workable groups or even larger ones from time to time. That committee is composed of six area committees and ad hoc special committees at various times. The situation is very organic and very responsive to input from the community, a particular school, the teachers, or the principals. Since systems resist adapting to change, you must have a strong push from the central office for any idea which must be systemized.

A Study of the Effects of Decentralization on Special Education in Two Large Urban School Districts[1]

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Decentralization as an end or a means to an end has been a notion of great controversy for many years in this country. Throughout its history, the principle of local control or home rule has been juxtaposed and inadequately balanced with the principle of centralized control. Part of the tension over these principles rises from the question, "Which aspects of public affairs should be administered centrally, and are some situations and groups more suited for local control than others?" Beyond this question is an additional one: "What form should local control or decentralization take, and how is the impact of decentralization indicated and shaped by its [illegible]

In the case of large city school systems, the most widespread response to such tensions has been some form of decentralization. We have identified what are essentially two forms: administrative and shift-in-control or political decentralization. In commenting on the two Altshuler (1970) made the following distinction:

> . . . [administrative decentralization] involves delegation from superior to subordinate officials within a bureaucracy. The organizing principle of the bureaucracy remains hierarchical. The top officials remain free to revoke the delegation at any time. The subordinate officials remain dependent in numerous ways upon the pleasure of their superiors. Political decentralization, by contrast, involves the transfer of authority to officials whose dependence is upon the subjurisdictional electorate, or, more narrowly, a subjurisdictional clientele. The assumption must be that such officials will not be manipulable by the former possessors of the transferred authority. (p. 64)

[1]The study was sponsored by the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education in cooperation with the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The irony of the distinction is that the people who argue either for or against decentralization rarely sort out which version of decentralization they are discussing. Consequently, when agreement has been reached that decentralization is an ideal concept, some persons are later surprised or angered by the reality that the other persons had a very different concept of decentralization in mind. A common example of this dichotomy is seen in the tendency of school administrations to respond to parent or community group demands for a version of shift-in-control decentralization (probably neighborhood boards) with a form of administrative decentralization.

Innocent misunderstandings, of course, are not the only reasons for confusion about the issue of decentralization. Some obvious reasons, documented by Gittell (1968) among others, for the reluctance to view decentralization in shift-in-control terms involve fear of loss of control by professionals, fear of the abandonment of integration efforts, and concern for the parochialism (e.g., local ethnic conflicts) that might be encouraged as a result of local control. One interesting twist to these arguments is that proposals for decentralization fail inherently because they attack the nature of groups per se—the inadequacies of groups are seen as the central dilemma—rather than the more appropriate target of unjust and ineffective relationships among groups (Fein, 1971).

The more popular support for administrative decentralization, on the other hand, seems to borrow its strength not from a belief in local control but from the disinfatuation with bureaucracy of both school officials and parents. Cohen (1969) offered the following explanation for the disinfatuation:

> . . . the notion that the root problem is bureaucracy probably has the broadest appeal. For one thing, the complexity and unresponsiveness of many big city school systems is legendary, no client of any class or color happily accepts the reign of the clerk, and increasing numbers reject the inflexible style and pedagogy of the schools. (p. 32)

Methods of Study

We were asked to examine representative cities of the Council of Great Cities and to respond to the following question: How have special education programs been affected by attempts of large city school districts to decentralize? Numerous, strong limitations on what such a study could produce soon became apparent. The effects of decentralization on special education were impossible to identify or measure in any precise way without using control groups. The information gathered in two cities could be treated fairly only as case study material

and not as general, representative knowledge about the relation between decentralization and special education in most American cities. Furthermore, we were aware that our project was only one part of a larger effort by the Leadership Training Institute (LTI) at the University of Minnesota to evaluate the direction of special education in large city school districts. Little information was available on the overall project or on the detailed situations in various cities.

One model for addressing the question of decentralization and its effects on special education would be to compare effects in systems which *have* decentralized with the effects expected by systems which were *about to* decentralize. The necessary cross-city data for such an inquiry were not available, however. An earlier report had identified seven decentralized school systems but said little about the state of affairs in non-decentralized districts. Two of those seven decentralized cities, Philadelphia and Chicago, were selected for this study.

After a series of planning sessions, we decided that the first task was to ascertain whether anyone working in special education programs in the two sample cities saw decentralization as an issue that affected his program. If, for example, decentralization was viewed as an issue with minimal or no impact on special education departments, then our conclusions would amount to a resounding, "No effect!" On the other hand, if decentralization did in fact speak directly or indirectly to the issue of the provision of special education services, then several questions might logically follow:

> Were the effects or results actually envisioned by the designers of the proposals to decentralize?
>
> How were such proposals formulated, that is, to what needs were they addressed?
>
> What tensions exist between the alteration of an organizational process and the alteration of organizational outcomes?
>
> Even if outcomes were important, how could people get a feel for them, that is, what forms of evaluation and decision rules are there?
>
> Is a change in the process itself (political decentralization as an end) a goal in itself for some?

After preliminary consideration of these issues, we formulated three hypotheses on the assumption that decentralization is, in fact, a real issue for people involved in special education. They are as follows:

1. Decentralization has not led to the creation of a more responsive decision-making process in the special education system

(to be judged by people's perceptions of change in the quality of special education services directly attributable to decentralization).

2. Decentralization has not led to a significant change in the behavior of staff or children (to be determined by the judgment of staff and parents, respectively).
3. Of all groups within the system, the special education group may be among the last holdouts for the education-by-professionals-only stance.

An idea tree was developed to guide us in both the design of a questionnaire (see Appendix C) and the analysis of responses, to test our hypotheses. We set out to collect these responses by talking to as many people as possible who were representative of those working at different levels below the superintendent's staff. On the average, each of us interviewed, in each city school system, eight to ten people. They were parents, teachers, and administrators or psychologists in special education departments. The questionnaire was administered to them in interviews which were conducted with a promise of anonymity for respondents. Tape recorders were not used. After the visit to each city we outlined our impressions of the situation and culled those quoted responses that were particularly relevant to each of our three hypotheses. Thus, the following analysis represents a synthesis of individual analyses of the effects of decentralization on the special education programs in both Philadelphia and Chicago.

It is probably a well-known fact that Harvard has given little attention to special education in the past. Indeed, the fact that two of us were from Harvard may have actually distorted the kind of information we received from some respondents; we are uncertain about how much being from Harvard may have hurt (or helped) us. We are, however, very much convinced of our increased appreciation of the problems faced by those concerned with special education and hope that we have contributed to the understanding of special education by placing it in a broader, political context.

Philadelphia

Where does decentralization stand?

The Philadelphia Public School System has been divided into eight administrative districts, established along both natural and man-made boundaries, since 1935. Each is headed by a district superintendent who is responsible to the Associate Superintendents for School Services and Field Operations. In general, observers of Philadelphia

school decision making have concluded that the spirit of the 1935 decentralization has been implemented in a very narrow way, insofar as district superintendents often have chosen not to exercise the autonomy they enjoy on paper.

On December 2, 1968, the Philadelphia Board of Public Education passed a resolution calling for the appointment of a commission to begin developing proposals for decentralization. Earlier that year, the New York City Schools had been heavily involved in teacher strikes and the issues surrounding community control. Furthermore, community control and decentralization were becoming key issues in a host of cities throughout the country. Against this background, the Commission on Decentralization and Community Participation was established in Philadelphia and held its first meeting on January 6, 1969. It was given the added task of examining the various issues of decentralization and their possible consequences for the Philadelphia school system.

Less than a month before the first meeting of the Commission on Decentralization and Community Participation, the final report of the special Committee for the Collaborative Study of Educational Programs for Handicapped Children was released. The report emphasized the conclusion that most handicapped children should be "mainstreamed," that is, served in regular schools and classrooms, and teaching personnel should be decentralized.

> . . . trained talents of special education personnel should be diffused throughout the entire school system and the administrative organization of special education should be designed to assure that this will be done.

The report suggested that the central office of the Division of Special Education essentially be an interpreter of policy, while much of the decision making on implementation of policy be handled in the offices of the district superintendents. It was recommended that the district superintendents and the central office work closely together but be independent, that is, that there be dual administrative responsibility and accountability. The notion implies an interesting mixture of cooperation and competition to improve services to children.

The report and, particularly, its recommendations for mainstreaming created great controversy. The Superintendent of Schools responded to the decentralization recommendation by suggesting that it be implemented in programs for educable retarded students in each district. He considered the recommendation infeasible for district programs serving relatively small numbers of other handicapped students, and that these programs should continue to report directly to the central office of the Division of Special Education. The controversy

over these issues prompted the School Committee to establish a review committee (Collaborative Study Review Committee) to take a second look at the issues and at the recommendations of the Collaborative Study of Educational Programs for Handicapped Children.

While this review committee was at work, the broader Commission on Decentralization and Community Participation issued its report in 1970. It neglected any mention of special education in the context of decentralization. The clear trend of the report was to give the district superintendents more power in general, but the needs of special education received no special attention. A close look at the make-up of the 88-member commission reveals that it did not include anyone specifically representing special education.

Thus, an attempt to honor the spirit of the 1935 decentralization began in earnest in 1970, but it dealt with the general administration of the system and had little impact on special education. When the Report of the Collaborative Study Review Committee was issued in February 1971 it had to repeat the issues and call for special education to catch up with other parts of the school system. While supporting the concept of mainstreaming and suggesting certain precautions, it recommended essentially the same administrative plan that the Superintendent had outlined: decentralized programs for educable retarded students and centralized programs for other handicapped children. In addition, the report suggested that parent input was essential in the "entire process of identification, classification, placement, determination of program, progress, evaluation, continuance in program, transition and reentry into regular program. . . ." Planning for the implementation of this suggestion was left up to the school system, however. The Report of the Collaborative Study Review Committee was not adopted as the policy of the School Committee, although there have been some developments in line with its recommendations.

A final major factor that influenced the present situation in Philadelphia with regard to decentralization and special education must be noted. In September 1971, the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania handed down a crucial decision in a class action suit, Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children (PARC), Nancy Beth Bowman, Et. al. v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The court held that several Pennsylvania statutes had the effect of denying adequate school services to mentally retarded children and that they were unconstitutional under the provisions of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Known since than as the "right to education" ruling, it held that every child between the ages of 6 and 21 had to be provided with access to a "free public program of education and training appropriate to his learning capacities." Furthermore, and

most important to the issue of change in the Philadelphia school system, the court ordered that this free access be provided "as soon as possible but in no event later than September 1, 1972"—one year from the date of the decree. The ruling was a dramatic new force for reform in special education, and various steps were taken to begin to comply with the court order.

For the purposes of this inquiry, it is most important to characterize the overall effects of all of these combined forces on the decentralization of special education in Philadelphia. At the time of our visit in November 1973, several developments were clear: The district superintendents had been given increased shared authority and had become "dually accountable" along with the central office of the Division of Special Education. In general, throughout the system, the district superintendents were most effective in working with elementary schools in which some mainstreaming was taking place, as contrasted with high schools. Also, in the one district we were able to visit intensively, provision had been made for advisory committees, direct parent access to the district superintendent's office and other participatory features to facilitate broader decision making on issues in special education. Services for the more severely handicapped youngsters remained more centralized, on the grounds of efficiency, although attitudes seemed to be changing in favor of having more of these children attend regular classes as well. On the surface, several changes had occurred, although they were unevenly distributed throughout the various districts. Yet, beneath the surface lurked the issues of the effects of these changes on perceptions of the situation, attitudes towards decentralization, and, of course, behavior patterns.

Perceptions of the relationship of decentralization and special education

We asked respondents for their perceptions of decentralization as it affected special education in Philadelphia. Among the interviewed personnel at the central office of the Division of Special Education, decentralization was seen as having a negative effect. For example, two respondents stated,

> . . . expression of district needs is crucial, but initiatives (guidance and money) from the central office are necessary. . . .
>
> . . . decentralization has created too many pressure points which have only led to confusion. . .

At least two other responses focused on quality of services and the lack of communication under decentralization.

Outside the central office, respondents opined that decentralization did not affect special education students.

> The study of decentralization had little effect. There is no policy of decentralization here.
>
> The decentralization effort of the sixties was not related to special education. Special education continues to be very centralized.

At one school, a respondent said that decentralization did not have much of an impact at the local school level; perhaps there were some changes at the district level but, even there, the impact was felt as an increase in clerical work rather than as changes in the power over decision making.

Only one person, a district supervisor, made any connection between the Report of the Collaborative Study of Educational Programs for Handicapped Children and broader decentralization within the Philadelphia school system. He suggested that the collaborative study started the decentralization process with its interest in integrating special education students into regular classes; and he spoke also of the recommendation for more shared authority and dual accountability between district superintendents and the central administration.

We found that special education district supervisors, who split their time between the central and district offices, and other persons in the central office of special education who have to live with administrative decentralization, were not generally in favor of the existing decentralization. Some district supervisors felt themselves to be in the untenable position of having to respond to two different heads. This group most frequently mentioned the lack of communication, also.

Community people and other people outside the central and district offices, in general, believed that special education was still *centralized*. This belief resulted partly from the nominal effects of decentralization and partly from the respondents' definitions of political, not administrative, decentralization.

Did decentralization lead to more responsive decision making in special education?

Insofar as people recognized some decentralization in special education, almost none suggested that it had improved the responsiveness, much less the quality, of decision making in Philadelphia. A cross-section of people felt that the present form of decentralization had caused many problems. Communications repeatedly surfaced as a major concern for district supervisors. A district supervisor said,

> Decentralization has meant more people involved in decision making implicitly, but the communication problems are great.

Another response came from a community representative:

> The delivery is decentralized (district decision making) but policy is set at the central level. Therefore there is no accountability and little choice for clients.

Thus, some respondents felt the school system was too decentralized and others felt it was not decentralized enough.

That the present form of decentralization might not be decentralized enough is further evidenced in the following comment by an official:

> Eighteenth and Market (site of Central Division of Special Education) calls the shots . . . "centralized" may be too strong. The Division of Special Education has major responsibility and district superintendents or principals have the right to react.

Responding to charges of strong decentralization, one official of the Division of Special Education said, "Our job is to get people to help children, not build empires."

In one of the more decentralized districts, an official viewed the active advisory committees, direct access to himself by parents, and closeness and rapport between the office staff and school personnel within the district as positive proof that decentralization has allowed more input into the improvement of services for the handicapped. But decentralization *allows* change; it does not guarantee it. He pointed out that while many people throughout the school system viewed PARC as adversative, it was not so viewed in his particular district. Unlike most other districts, his had chosen to exercise its autonomy and to take steps to change the process of decision making in special education.

Did decentralization lead to behavioral change in special education?

Aside from people's perceived attitudes about the relation between decentralization and its effect on responsiveness in the decision-making system, we wanted to know whether behavioral changes had occurred as a result of decentralization, that is, whether any possible changes resulted in the behaviors of administrative and teaching personnel and children.

Generally, we received negative responses. Concerning administrators, one central office official told us,

> People, especially veterans in the central office, feel more comfortable with control and have not yet adapted themselves to the role of advocate.

With regard to teacher behavior, two differing points of view were offered. One view is typified by the following response:

> Teachers are generally receptive to decentralization. As a result, teachers have been given money to do innovative projects.

This view, although positive, suggests that changes may be occurring as a result of heightened interest in additional resources rather than in children. Other responses did not share even this limited optimism. Assessments by the people who had supported decentralization originally indicated that changes in teacher behavior, especially with regard to parent participation, had lagged far behind the initial expectations. Obviously, because teachers are by nature much more numerous and decentralized than administrators, it is much harder to gauge either the extent or quality of changes that are occurring among all of the teachers. Thus, firm conclusions about the effects of decentralization on behaviors of special education teachers will require relatively long-term studies of teachers in systems that are undergoing decentralization.

Much the same can be said of the effects of decentralization on the behavior of children; complex measures and perhaps complex experiments will be required before we will be able to get beyond the general conclusion that little direct behavioral change has resulted directly or indirectly from decentralization.

Aside from the problems of having neither the necessary time nor mandate to undertake such long-term studies, it is clear that the problem of isolating the effects of decentralization would be insurmountable. It would be like trying to isolate the effects of American elementary schools on general levels of education while denying the existence of Sesame Street. In this case, the unpredictable intervening variable is the PARC court decree. Time and again we were told that the court case had had a much greater impact than decentralization. Any top priority attention given to special education has emanated from this source. As one community respondent stated,

> . . . the study on decentralization has had little effect on kids; the court case has had tremendous effects.

A district official said he is deeply committed to respect for the law and, therefore, to the implementation of the court decree; he is concentrating his efforts on providing inservice training for teachers and improving transportation for special education children. Thus, decentralization is seen as a possible tool for facilitating the implementation

of significant changes in special education, but in and of itself decentralization is not seen as capable of producing a greater sense of the need for such changes.

Educators as professionals

The idea of the "educator as professional," held by special education personnel, seemed to us to have played a major role in determining attitudes about the decentralization of decision making. In general, central office personnel in special education identified a unique quality about special education that warranted some form of centralization.

On related issues two school officials made the following observations:

> Resistance of the staff is not unlike general opposition to decentralization; eventually, the attitude of people who work in the central division of special education will have to catch up to the structural change.
>
> . . . the reaction of the special education people, specifically the perceived need for more control, is a glorious cop-out.

The latter viewpoint was not universal. One respondent, for example, took a very different position. She attacked the non-professional status of parents.

> . . . people (mothers with mentally retarded children) without training or preparation think they know all the answers.

These comments, of course, only strengthen the idea that, in fact, special education professionals cherished their special status and believed that until other school personnel were ably trained, a centralized system was the best solution. This attitude was expressed more strongly whenever special educators began discussing the implementation of the "right to education" court decree. Rapid implementation of this mandate, it was argued, required the application of greater skill and knowledge, not less.

We also found that special status accorded persons in special education was reinforced both at the district level and in the local community. One district official who talked about decentralization and the autonomy of his office also spoke about the central office's policy-making authority in rather positive terms. He felt that inservice training of teachers and (especially) administrators was an urgent necessity if decentralized districts were to fully implement the court decree. The support from the community came from one very prominent Philadelphia parent who indicated a certain comfort with control by professionals (in the absence of local control), as long as that control was characterized by an accountability system and quality service.

Chicago

Where does decentralization stand?

The decentralization of schools in Chicago began as a result of pressure for increased community participation in decision making. The drive was spearheaded by Black organizations such as SCLC, PUSH, and STEP. While demands for local control were receiving a good deal of attention in Chicago and elsewhere, around 1966-1967, a crisis over the forced resignation of the school superintendent opened a way for implementing a plan to move the locus of decision making closer to people being served in the districts. The Chicago Board of Education engaged the consulting firm of Booze, Allen, and Hamilton to design a structural form that would allow for increased organizational effectiveness. The research firm concluded that decentralization was in order and recommended the form of decentralization which was finally adopted by the Chicago board. Essentially, the following three proposals were made:

1. That the Superintendent's function should emphasize planning, developing programs, and evaluating;
2. That day-to-day management should be delegated to the newly created position of deputy superintendent; and
3. That the city should be divided into three areas of manageable size, each with an associate superintendent responsible for an area equivalent to a major city school system.

Later in this section, it is shown that most problems related to the implementation of decentralization in Chicago are caused by a confusion of the proposed new roles.

Perceptions of the relationship of decentralization and special education

Decentralization appeared to have little direct effect upon special education in terms of services except for an increase in funds for administrative costs. For special education personnel in both the central and district offices, decentralization was a major concern. They differed, however, in their perceptions of its operations. Respondents in the central division staff indicated strong sentiment against decentralization while respondents in the district offices expressed some dissatisfaction only with the degree to which decentralization had been implemented. The following responses are examples of those elicited from central division staff:

> Decentralization has affected us by creating problems due to fouled up lines of communication.

> Decentralization has definitely affected special education. That is the whole problem. Decentralization has led to fragmentation; there is no cohesiveness and the kids suffer. The parents complain of getting the "run around" (among the area office, district office, and central office).
>
> Most everyone objected to the process of decentralization because new layers were interjected. District superintendents, principals, and teachers were at first delighted until they found out that they were not going to be "in charge."

The perceptions of these respondents clearly support our impression that, in Chicago, the interrelationship of people working within an ill-defined system of shared decision making is the major cause of problems arising from the implementation of decentralization.

Responses from district office people supported that impression but also indicated dissatisfaction with the implementation of decentralization.

> Decentralization brought some people out of the central office, moving them closer, but not close enough, to where the children are.
>
> We don't have decentralization. They started towards it. But we won't get it without legislative changes in terms of funds. Decentralization has affected nothing except to delay a few things.

Despite the limitations of decentralization expressed by the district personnel, decentralization has had a positive affect on special education services, according to one respondent at the school level. An assistant school principal said

> I [had] never heard of a special education consultant before decentralization came about. I learned more about special education as a result. Decentralization brought certain services closer to schools and classrooms.

Feelings were strong in all segments of our sample that decentralization had caused considerable increases in the cost of special education services. One person estimated that the increase was threefold. The General Superintendent of Schools for Chicago estimated the additional administrative cost to be $1.1 million.[2]

The original concept of decentralization in Chicago did not specifically consider special education programs. At that time, the tendency was to define the issue of decentralization in terms of broader and more controversial issues, such as racial integration. For example, one respondent viewed decentralization as an obstacle to racial integration.

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[2]Response to a questionnaire on decentralized school districts designed by Dr. Jack Hornback.

> With the issues of ethnic dissatisfaction and integration, decentralization was a "cop-out," and the best one you could have. [We] may have to re-centralize later because decentralization has been a strong set-back to social integration.

Did decentralization lead to more responsive decision making in special education?

The Booze, Allen, and Hamilton report ostensibly purported to open additional pressure points within the Chicago school system with the recommendation that area offices be created and administratively sandwiched between the offices of the assistant and district superintendents. The report attempted to clarify the purpose of the proposal by describing the functions of two administrative officers:

> *Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel and Special Education* to provide functional guidance to pupil personnel service units in the areas and coordinate special education programs throughout the school system.
>
> *Associate Area Supervisor* to administer total program of activities of school system within his . . . area.

It should be noted that the new functions of the district superintendent, whose role would be most affected by the proposed change, were not discussed. Proponents of the plan made only the brief suggestion that the "role of district superintendent should be that of 'assistant and associate' with responsibility for a group of schools." This fact is particularly noteworthy in light of our discovery that the lack of coherence characteristic of the Chicago decentralization plan is the result of an unclear delineation of roles and the nature of administrative responsibility at each level. Indeed, it is more than a bit ironic that attempts to move decision making closer to the clients of a service system have involved the addition of a layer of decision makers *above* the local district level.

Some people at the various offices, however, felt that decentralization had created additional avenues for community input as well as changing the locus of decision making. A central office respondent said,

> Now there is far more community and parent involvement, and I believe in decentralization, but I believe the emphasis should be on the district level, not on the area.

A district officer succinctly stated,

> . . . no one is really against moving decision making down to a more local level.

A school principal offered the following observation:

> With decentralization there is more parent participation than there has been in the past. Parents couldn't get close to the board. Now decision-making power is closer to the people.

The responses from area office personnel differed from these three comments. Some indicated that only another bureaucratic layer had been created. Previously, parents had approached the Board with concerns requiring policy decisions and received direct feedback. Now, in approaching the area office, parents have to wait for their concerns to be heard by at least the area and associate superintendent before a decision can be made. The feeling that this form of decentralization moved parents farther away from decision making was shared by one person in the central office who believed that,

> . . . in general, decentralization has meant the addition of more signatures to forms.

Did decentralization lead to behavior change in special education?

There is no question that decentralization caused behavioral changes in staff persons in the central, area, and district offices. New roles and job descriptions were created under the administrative reorganization. Several central office staff members retained their positions but acquired new titles; with them came changes in responsibilities, functions, and areas of influence. A statement reflecting very strong sentiment on the change came from one central office administrator, who reports to the Director of Special Education.

> I am so constricted by new rules of area and district organization. I had to fight to maintain my professional integrity. I took a lot of battering from line people and it cost me a lot in terms of my health. With "dictatorship" everything went smoothly. With decentralization we have big problems. We (in the central office) became the scapegoats for the area's inefficiencies. The central office has been murdered. Everything we ever did has to be cast in a new mold.

At the district and school-building levels, changes in activities centered around the additional amount of time spent with parents and parent groups. One district superintendent commented that 60 percent of his time is spent now in dealing with community people. One principal discussed the additional time he was spending with parents and the positive feedback he was receiving from them. Attendance figures had risen at his school and he felt that the increase should be considered a criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of his school program. Higher attendance represented a positive change in the behavior of children in favor of attending school—for whatever reasons.

In general, respondents believed that the apparent changes in staff behavior were due as much to such factors as community pressure and recent legislation as to decentralization. The contribution of the teachers' union, for example, was heavily praised, the union was cited as the prime mover for the creation of the ERA Program (Early Remediation Approach) in the Bureau of Socially Maladjusted Children. While the motivation of the teachers' union for this move is subject to some question (e.g., "get the trouble-makers out of my class"), it is obvious that the union and such groups as ASPIRA, a Spanish-speaking community pressure group, have contributed greatly to behavioral change in the special education staff.

Two pieces of legislation have had overwhelming effects on the provision of special education services. (a) Legislative Bill 2671 permits the investment of increased state funds in districts that can show the delivery of special education services above and beyond the usual to children who need the very special attention. (b) Illinois recently incorporated into its state law the provision that all psychological examinations must be given to students in their native languages by bilingual and bicultural examiners. Other than a relatively few numbers of Spanish-speaking children who had been able to rid themselves of the label "educable mentally handicapped," however, none of these efforts in special education have affected the lives of children nearly as much as those of the involved adults.

Educators as professionals

Centralization of special education appeared to be preferred by administrative personnel because of the unique skill and knowledge allegedly required of the staff. "It used to be that well-trained professionals helped children," complained one person. The proliferation of programs following both mandatory legislation and decentralization has apparently necessitated relaxation of the tight, professional qualifications previously required for employment in some special education programs.

Some other comments, however, actually show a reconsideration of the "educator as professional" stance by appearing to favor a form of political decentralization. For example, a psychologist assigned to the central office said,

> I see my job as disappearing with the perfection of decentralization. We're (particular department) centralized because we're too few, but the ideal is to have bilingual/bicultural psychologists in each area.

Another person who was recently assigned to the central office, said,

> Decentralization helps to bring services closer to the people which, in special education, is more crucial for speeding placement and the criticalness of decisions affecting students.

The tendency of these same people to perceive lack of coordination in and duplication of procedures as serious drawbacks of the decentralized system, reinforces the notion that decentralization, in the end, should be viewed as a form of administrative restructuring alone. If it is true that the spirit of decentralization is to involve more people in the decision-making process, then it is ironic that those who embrace that spirit are unwilling to live with the accompanying consequences.

Conclusions

The process of administrative decentralization has definitely affected the departments of special education in Philadelphia and Chicago. In both cities, educators at all levels were at least aware of decentralization as an issue whether or not they were familiar with the history of forces behind the system. Consistently, central office personnel most directly felt the impact of decentralization and cited it as an issue that "tremendously" affected special education. From our observations, the greatest changes in roles, responsibilities, and routines engendered by decentralization occurred at the central office level.

At the local school and community levels, the effects of decentralization on special education were much less directly felt. The tone and content of responses from people in these spheres contrast markedly with the opinions of central office personnel. Principals were largely unaware of the history of decentralization in their school systems. They were not involved with the process by which the school systems had adopted the decentralized administrative plans. In Philadelphia, some principals felt that special education continued to be "very centralized"; they noted little or no changes attributable to decentralization in the special classes within their schools. In Chicago, district office and school personnel similarly felt that a "central tendency" prevailed in special education. Indeed, aspects of pupil placement, curriculum design, and funding are yet under the aegis of the central office, in Chicago. Partly because of their ideals of more local control and less bureaucracy under a decentralized system, community people in Philadelphia felt that special education programs are still "centralized." In one instance in which parent participation was solicited and encouraged, the momentum for such action was generated from within the school and specific to that one district.

When asked if there were anything unique in special education which made its interaction with a decentralized administrative structure different from other areas in the school system, an overwhelming number of respondents answered "yes." The usual explanations centered around the efficiency or feasibility of distributing services among districts. Many believed that a costly duplication of services either exists or would be created if services for low-incidence handicaps were not offered in a central location. The coordination of identification and diagnostic procedures, placement and follow-up, transportation, and provision of quality instructors were generally viewed as "best" handled through a central agency responsible for the entire city.

The Collaborative Study Review Committee in Philadelphia recommended that the numerically largest program of educable retarded children be the responsibility of the district superintendents. Implicit in this recommendation was the favoring of plans to mainstream these moderately or mildly handicapped students within the general school population as much as possible. At present in Philadelphia, retarded educable youngsters (RE) attend programs within their home districts but not necessarily within their home schools. Attempts to move toward mainstreaming have met with limited success.

In Chicago, several people concurred that certain areas within special education, such as services to children with low-incidence involvements (the physically handicapped, auditorily or visually impaired, trainable level mentally handicapped, and multi-handicapped youngsters), might have to be recentralized because the occurence of the handicapping conditions does not follow district lines and, therefore, decentralization cannot answer the needs of such children.

One respondent felt that the failure to nurture the growth of professional qualities in special educators under decentralization might prove to be that scheme's downfall. This notion—that higher professional standards can be best fostered under centralized supervision—was shared by many respondents.

In the planning of decentralization, no groups seemed to have specifically considered the question of how to provide services most appropriately for handicapped children. Indeed, in both cities, the greatest impetus for the top priority afforded special education comes from forces outside the administrative structure. The "right to education" ruling of the courts had the strongest impact on special education services and programs in Philadelphia. In Chicago, the thrust and funds for additional special services were provided in 1969 by the passage of mandatory legislation requiring school programs for all Illinois children. While decentralization was an issue that affected special education—especially the top administrators in the central

offices—its impact was less significant than the mandate to provide services for all children. Whether the impact of decentralization on special education actually filters down to the school level and influences the effectiveness of programs serving the needs of handicapped children, is doubtful from our observations.

The publicly stated goals of decentralization were to move decision making closer to the district and school levels, to increase parent participation, and to provide greater autonomy for local schools so they could better meet the needs of their students. These goals have not been fulfilled; at best, they have been only approximated in both Philadelphia and Chicago. The failure to reach the goals may account for the general feelings that decentralization *as practiced in these cities* needs improvement. The nature of decentralization in both systems is based on changes in administrative structure rather than in participants. Decentralization was espoused for reasons other than enhancing the delivery of services to handicapped students. For example, there is, in both cities, a strong appeal from persons at all levels to "recentralize" special education services for children in the low-incidence categories. It may well be only one of a variety of possible solutions that could provide effectively and creatively for the special needs of severely handicapped youngsters. For example, a number of locally controlled parent boards may decide to join together to share human resources and wealth to provide for the children with very special needs. While this proposal may sound very familiar to the centralized structure now in existence in most cities, there is a very great difference between decisions that are imposed on a group with given expressed needs, and those that emerge from the deliberations of the group. Indeed, this difference constitutes the very nature of the tension that exists between administrative decentralization and political decentralization or community control.

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Summary of Discussion

Question: Did you find any evidence in the two cities of the press for decentralization arising to any extent from forces concerned with special education?

Avery: No.

Question: Have the departments of education in the two states decentralized?

Response: In Illinois, decentralization is a lot bigger than just a major school system; the state department of education is decentralized now and so are other state departments like mental health and corrections. One of the problems is learning who has the responsibility.

In Pennsylvania, city school systems are very much under the direction of the state because of the implementation of the right to education decree. Special education was not centralized in the state before but it is becoming so. For example, procedures for identifying and admitting non-attendant handicapped children were outlined in detail by the state. To change the instructional program because of this new population, the state wrote a detailed manual for actual classroom instruction. In the field, such procedures are interpreted as extreme centralization.

Characteristics of Decentralization and its Impact on Special Education

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Concepts of Decentralization

As a political scientist who has done most of her research in education and who has been involved with the concept of decentralization since the early 1960's, I am concerned with the failure of most analysts to distinguish the different processes to which the label decentralization is applied. The term is used loosely by some people to denote the distribution of administrative powers within an organization, and by others to describe a redistribution of political power. The two processes differ significantly in concept and form. The first, administrative decentralization, is the more traditional concept of decentralization; it is the sharing of power among professionals within the system. Essentially, it relates to an internal reorganization. Political decentralization, on the other hand, is a more recently developed concept and refers to the redistribution of power between professionals and lay citizens. Another term used to describe this latter phenomenon is community control. Political decentralization or community control denotes the shift of power from those who run an organization to the people who are served by it. One way to judge whether a decentralization process is administrative or political is to determine where the decision-making power lies. If policymaking is wholly in the hands of professionals within the organization, the decentralization is administrative; if decision making is shared by professional personnel and citizens or clients, the decentralization is likely to be political.

In terms of output, it is vitally important that we distinguish between administrative and political decentralization in city school systems, particularly since only two cities in the country—New York and Detroit—have adopted a measure of political decentralization. From a researcher's point of view, it would be extremely interesting to contrast what is happening in those two cities (Detroit and New York) with what is happening in the cities which have instituted administrative decentralization. Such a comparison is difficult, however, since

the usually desired output of political decentralization—an increase in client or community participation—is not an output usually associated with plans for administrative decentralization. Most large cities have decentralized administratively, I believe, to resist the pressure to decentralize politically. In many of those cities, mounting pressure for some form of political decentralization or community participation resulted in the reorganization of internal administration as a stopgap measure. However, in some cities which were on the verge of increasing community participation, the movement toward administrative decentralization may have limited these efforts.

Another important factor to be considered in plans for political decentralization is that related to the extent of client involvement in decision making. In the original OEO programs funded by the federal government, citizen involvement was defined by the term "participation" and there was some disagreement over whether participation was to include a role in decision making. One must distinguish citizen participation from direct citizen involvement in decision making. Under plans for administrative decentralization, citizen or parent participation may be called for but would not include a role in policy making. Under political decentralization or community control, citizens or parents would be specifically included in the policy process. The extent of power exercised by client or citizen boards may differ under different arrangements but the essential power would be manifest in some form.

If we consider decentralization on a continuum, the degree of the delegation of power to the local units will determine which end of that continuum a school system is at. I would say that both Detroit and New York are somewhere at the beginning of political decentralization. Indeed, I would characterize the decentralization in both cities as compromise plans. They delegate only very limited powers to local school boards. In New York City, for instance, negotiation of union contracts, allocation of budget resources, maintenance of high schools, and control of certain other functions are still in the hands of the central board and office. Certain personnel powers are delegated to locally elected boards, however.

Another misapprehension regarding political decentralization is that it is an all or nothing situation. In fact, centralization can coexist with decentralization. Some degree of decision making can be allocated at the level of the local school board, other decisions can be made at the district level, and still others can be retained at the central office level. Our own system of federalism is a good example of political decentralization in practice. Many people argue that even in a com-

bined regional school district—a city and its suburbs, for example—some decentralization is possible by the allocation of certain services or functions to the various geographic components.

Evaluations of Decentralization

Initially, I understood that I was to present a review of the responses to the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education questionnaire, "Special Education in Decentralized City School Systems." Because my research is related to the problems and issues of decentralization which are implicit in the responses. I have expanded the paper to include some of the research findings on school decentralization.

Strictly speaking, we have very little evidence on the evaluation of school system decentralization. Our experience with political decentralization is even more limited than our experience with the administrative form. When you look at the time period involved in reorganization to achieve decentralization, it is immediately evident that any evaluation would necessarily be qualified. One major shortcoming in social research is the short time period we allow ourselves before we rush to judgments. Instead of trying to evaluate the effects of political decentralization after 3 years, as I was forced to do, one should wait a minimum of 5 and preferably 10 years before initiating such studies. I must caution you, therefore, to be aware of the limitations of drawing conclusions from such short-term evaluations.

In my evaluations I determined that the major outputs of school decentralization should be in three areas, personnel, budget, and curriculum. An investigation of *changes* in the policy process in those three major areas would suggest the impact of the reorganization.

Under administrative decentralization, I would look for different outputs than I would under political decentralization. For instance, I would not consider public participation to be a major output of administrative decentralization. Some school officials in administratively decentralized school systems, however, might be interested in knowing whether any public participation has occurred as a result of the restructuring. School officials in politically decentralized school systems (New York and Detroit) would necessarily be interested in knowing the extent of citizen participation in activities other than decision making. For example, in our study of three demonstration districts in New York, we looked at who was participating as well as the kinds of participation. We examined the backgrounds of people recruited

for local board membership and compared them to appointed and central board members to determine any differences. We sought to determine personnel changes as a result of the demonstration district experience. Participation in the traditional sense of voting and attendance at meetings was analyzed but, in addition, we looked at the participation of parents in the schools. Prior experience had shown that in the particular district we studied, parents came to school only when a discipline problem occurred. With the demonstration district experimental form we surveyed parents to determine if they came to the schools for other reasons.

In our review of the three areas of policy (personnel, budget, and curriculum) we used change as the basis for study. Was the selecting of personnel the same, were the same people selecting personnel in the districts? With regard to budget, which we considered the most important area of decision making, who established priorities? Were the same people making decisions about the allocation of resources? What were their priorities? Were their decisions the same or different as compared to the earlier arrangement? In the area of educational programs, we explored the degree to which change in the system and the redistribution of decision making result in educational innovation, that is, interest and flexibility in adopting new programs as well as the sources of such innovation. The overall question was to look at any change in the participation of clients and to determine whether power was really redistributed or if, in fact, professionals were still making all the decisions.

In the evaluation of decentralization, as in any social science research, the determination of cause and effect relations is very difficult because variables cannot be held constant. When a politically decentralized school district, such as Detroit, complains that it is spending more money under decentralization, losing money, or is in financial difficulty, the fact may be that the district was in financial difficulty before decentralization. The determination of whether decentralization is costing more money would take a very extensive and comprehensive analysis of costs for particular services matched against the extent of the particular services provided. Even more difficult to isolate is *the* specific independent variable that leads to a particular output. On what basis is decentralization identified as the independent variable that produced a certain result? Perhaps intervening variables are at issue. In most cases, such a determination would take a far more comprehensive analysis than is available in most studies of decentralization. For the most part, the cause and effect relationship is simply assumed to exist.

Time as a Factor

As I indicated earlier, the time factor is important in the evaluation of decentralization. Changes in organization or participation based on one or two years of experience can be meaningless. Take, for example, pupil achievement as an output, which is a popular measure of educational quality. Over the last 20-30 years, pupil achievement test scores in most large cities have gone down. When decentralization is evaluated on the basis of these scores, we may find that the scores are continuing to go down or remain the same. The scores are an erroneous measure of the effectiveness of decentralization; they reflect a historical trend in which variables more important than decentralization are at work. If I were really devious, on the other hand, I might suggest that the current upgrading in achievement scores in New York City are a by-product of the decentralization. I am too good a social scientist to hypothesize such a cause-and-effect relation in such a short time period, however.

After the New York City demonstration districts were abolished, an article in *Commentary* magazine concluded that the decentralization or community control experiments in New York City were a failure. The reason given was that reading scores in Ocean Hill and Brownsville had gone down. It turned out that although those reading scores were taken a year after the districts had been abolished, the results were attributed to the decentralization experiment instead of being examined in the context of the historical decrease in student reading scores. My point is that too often policy decisions are based on simplistic evaluations which can be misleading as well as inaccurate.

Having said that, I would like to discuss some of the evaluations I have done. You should keep in mind the limitations that I have suggested which come out of my experiences in attempting such evaluations.

Decentralization in New York City

The Institute for Community Studies, which I directed, spent three years gathering material on the New York City demonstration districts. In looking at them, we concluded that they were probably one of the few experiments in community control—or that they were closest to the concept of community control—that we have had nationally. The schools in those three districts were under community control not because certain powers were delegated to the citizens but because the districts assumed that they had the powers. I think that they were probably one of the best laboratories, albeit very uncertain

laboratories, for examining the results of community control. A great deal of controversy resulted almost immediately after the establishment of these districts and they were abolished within three years.

In our analysis of that experience we used the formula that I outlined previously: examining the output in terms of changes in who made the decisions, the methods used in personnel selection, budgeting, and innovative educational programs. Our analysis was not concerned with the individual programs, but with the degree of innovation in the programs as compared to programs in other districts in the city. We concluded that a major change occurred in the way things were done in those districts. In effect, they became more receptive to innovative programs. I think that all of the studies based on individual schools or districts with any experience with parent participation and decision making, which I know about, indicate the same results, that is, that receptivity to and flexibility in innovation are greater.

We found changes in the way personnel was selected. In the case of Ocean Hill, for instance, principals were not selected off the established personnel list. The community was granted special permission, after much ado, from the state commissioner to create a category called "Demonstration School Principal." Those principals, as well as the superintendent, did not even qualify under the traditional examination procedure. I should add here that the new procedure was subsequently abandoned because the courts found the system invalid. But it was in those districts that the challenge to established procedure was first made and a new way of selecting principals was instituted. The change was not only in terms of not using the traditional, professional screening devices, but also in terms of who had the power to choose the principals. For the first time in New York City, community boards were involved in the selection of principals.

One of the rationalizations for community control is that it results in changes in the self-identities and attitudes of teachers and students. Our research indicated that in IS 201, a decentralized school district, the self-identity of children was indeed increased. However, this area is difficult to evaluate without extensive survey research.

My evaluations of the demonstration districts (Gittell, 1972) and of two years of citywide decentralization in New York City (Gittell, 1973) suggest that innovation is more likely to occur under decentralization, parent participation increases, and that changes in policy affecting personnel and curriculum matters are likely to be made. Responsiveness to local circumstances is also likely to be encouraged. These conclusions provide a general background for the review of the impact of decentralization on special education as indicated in the limited questionnaire survey.

In almost every large city that I know about, one of the objections to decentralization is that you cannot attract personnel; people will not go to certain districts if the central administration does not assign them there. The second objection, probably more serious, is that there are not enough trained people to move into all the districts where they are needed and, furthermore, the expense of moving them would be very great. I would not want to be put in the position of saying that decentralization is not expensive. It is expensive. What has to be computed, however, is what you are getting for your money under decentralization versus what you got for your money prior to decentralization. When you increase the delivery of services and make them more responsive, then, I think, the initial expense is well worth it.

Analysis of Responses to Questionnaire

The impact of decentralization on special education in the great cities is a provocative topic because it permits comparison of the strategies of two contemporary political movements in public education whose interests have been joined on several fronts: special education and minority populations.

The special education movement initially directed its energies toward making central school systems recognize their responsibilities to a particular clientele, handicapped children, which they had long ignored. Having achieved some recognition through special status in the system, the special education groups now look for acceptance into the mainstream of education as a more meaningful goal. By contrast, minority populations have viewed political decentralization as the appropriate means for achieving equity for themselves in the school systems.

A comparison of the two movements is important not only because both looked to major adjustments in the education process, but because both populations often overlap and sometimes they conflict and compete. Reynolds (1973) has noted that "minority group members are tending to take strongly negative attitudes toward almost every activity conducted in the name of special education," and their opposition may have placed "the future of special education . . . in doubt" (p. 15 of ms.). Although often seeking common goals, historically, the means to those ends have been different for the two groups. Minority populations have looked to equal treatment and greater local control while special education groups have sought special treatment and the protection of central control. A change in the strategies of some segments of the special education group, however, has joined the interests

of the two movements in effectively demonstrating more common goals. As the special education group seeks entrance into the mainstream, decentralization becomes a more acceptable structure.

Some obvious concerns in some quarters about support for special education in a decentralized system can be anticipated. Since special education is the beneficiary of central school system support in most large cities, some supporters may fear that local districts will abandon such costly programs. This criticism of decentralization is general. However, the supporters of the decentralization movement may maintain that inclusion of special education in the mainstream education structure can be effected more meaningfully through decentralization. Neighborhood districts potentially offer the opportunity for greater response to community needs in special education and the availability of more appropriate facilities. These hypotheses can be tested reliably only through experience with decentralization. Unfortunately, only two large cities in the country have experienced political decentralization, New York and Detroit. One must look, therefore, at the models of administrative decentralization in large cities around the country for qualified evidence on the impact of decentralization on special education.

Using the status of special education (central vs local) as a basis for determining the extent of the decentralization, one can separate city school systems into two categories. (This classification includes only those 17 cities from which responses to the questionnaire sent out by the Leadership Training Institute were received.) The cities that retain more of their special education functions under central control are Minneapolis, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Boston. In Detroit, Atlanta, Miami, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Baltimore, more of the special education functions are shared by central and local administrations or are decentralized to the local districts. Given these categories for analysis one can hypothesize from the responses that in the latter category, cities with more local control of special education, more innovation is taking place. The evidence for the hypothesis is suggestive rather than conclusive.

Unfortunately, the responses to the questionnaires do not shed as much light on these matters as one would have liked. If special education programs remained primarily under central direction after administrative decentralization, respondents tended to ignore certain questions relating to new approaches that might develop out of the situation. Although special education may not be formally included in the decentralization plan, it can be influenced by system reorganization. For example, to the extent that area or district superintendents are responsible for schools in which special education programs are

conducted, such programs very well may be affected, although informally, by decentralization. The questionnaire did not successfully elicit such cause-and-effect relationships.

The distinction between administrative and political decentralization is also of some importance. Administrative decentralization is designed to alleviate the complexity and remoteness of the headquarters' staffs by delegating greater discretion in decision making to administrators in the field. Critics suggest that administrative decentralization would not necessarily make school bureaucrats more responsive to local community needs and desires. Political decentralization goes considerably beyond administrative decentralization insofar as it entails the creation of mechanisms—elected local school boards; required consultation between these boards and clients of public schools with respect to the selection of personnel, education programs, budgetary considerations; and so on—which are aimed at giving the public a greater voice in the development of educational policy. Given the fact that Detroit appears to be the city in which the greatest effort is being made to bring special education into the mainstream of education, it may be relevant that it has undergone some political decentralization.

The questionnaire's stated purpose was to collect data from "Special Educators . . . who have confronted or will confront the problem of *administrative* decentralization." This purpose, it seems, was translated into questions which, for the most part, emphasized administrative decentralization; the consequence is that political decentralization is largely ignored. Most of the questions refer almost exclusively to the relations that exist *between different parts of the school bureaucracy* rather than to relations between different parts of the school bureaucracy *and* the public. Consequently, there is a gap in information regarding the role of the community. The response from Detroit is the only one in which this factor was stressed; the respondent noted his belief that decentralization has been a plus, largely because it has involved more citizens in the school decision-making process. Had the questionnaire as a whole been more open to the matter of political decentralization, we would perhaps have learned a good deal more about the role of non-school-professionals in special education, even in those cities that have experienced only administrative decentralization.

Given these general reservations about the questionnaire, one can proceed to review further evidence on the impact of decentralization on special education. Of the 17 school systems that completed questionnaires in their entirety, 11 indicated that they have instituted administrative decentralization (Oakland, Boston, Memphis, Atlanta,

Detroit, Chicago, Miami, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Los Angeles). The six that have not decentralized are Houston, Dallas, Buffalo, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Denver. Geography is not an apparent factor in the determination of administrative decentralization. An equal distribution of Southern, Northern, and Western cities have adopted such plans. Similarly, the percentage of minority population in the system does not appear to be a factor in encouraging or discouraging administrative decentralization (Table 1).

Table 1

Minority Population in 17 School Districts
(Percentages)

City	Minority School Population (%)
Decentralized School Districts	
Atlanta	80.0
Baltimore	70.0
Boston	38.0
Chicago	69.0
Detroit	69.2
Los Angeles	54.1
Memphis	67.9
Miami	51.0
Minneapolis	15.0
Oakland	70.6
Philadelphia	65.0
Centralized School Districts	
Buffalo	42.9
Cleveland	57.0
Dallas	52.0
Denver	41.7
Houston	59.0
San Francisco	54.7

An important aspect of a decentralized, urban, school system is the size of the individual districts or subunits. The Bundy Report, for example, was concerned that each district be "large enough to offer a full range of educational services yet small enough to maintain prox-

imity to community needs and to provide diversity and administrative flexibility" (Fantini, Gittell, & Magat, 1971, p. 110). Thus, the Bundy Report recommended that "from thirty to no more than sixty community school districts should be created in N.Y.C., ranging in size from about 12,000 to 40,000 pupils . . ." (p. 110). If one uses this recommendation as a general standard, all but one of the cities measures up to it (Table 2). The range is from an average of 16,167 per district for Boston to 51,053 for Los Angeles.[1]

Table 2

Average Size of Decentralized Districts

City	School Population	No. of Districts	Average Size
Atlanta	100,000	5	20,000
Baltimore	—*	9	—*
Boston	97,000	6	16,167
Chicago	556,788	27	26,218
Detroit	270,000	8	33,750
Los Angeles	612,638	12	51,053
Memphis	119,415	4	29,854
Miami	142,344	6	23,724
Minneapolis	58,000	3	19,333
Oakland	56,458	3	18,819
Philadelphia	280,000	8	35,000

Source: Questionnaire, questions I & IV-a.

*Not available.

Budget and Resources

One of the fundamental concerns of special education people necessarily is the availability of funds to local districts and/or administrators. This concern reflects some of the general fears that adequate funding for special education will not be forthcoming under decentralization. Respondents from 7 of the 11 cities referred explicitly to financial difficulties.

It is worth noting the feelings on budgetary matters expressed by two of the respondents. The special educator from Detroit wrote,

[1]One must note, however, that these figures assume that the various subunits in these cities are of the same size.

> Frustration caused by the lack of adequate funds has generated discouragement and some bitterness. Region Boards with decision-making powers to hire staff and to implement curricular changes have been forced by the financial crisis to forestall innovations and to cut back on staff. (Detroit questionnaire, p. 14)

Budgetary problems have also plagued Boston; the city's respondent noted that "support staff for the Area Superintendents has never been provided as planned because of austerity" (Boston questionnaire, p. 4). Another related concern regarding the impact of decentralization is the disparity in resources and facilities that may occur from district to district. The Boston respondent observed that "serious differences in available space for special education programs from one area to another" tends to create problems. Although she expected decentralization to result in a saving of space, an increase in available staff, and an increase in the amount of money allocated for inservice training and supervision, she pointed out that such expectations were based on the funding design of a new law for special education, but that it is a pattern for Massachusetts "to pass laws and then fail to provide the funds that have been promised" (Boston questionnaire, p. 14).

The respondent from Miami dealt with a similar concern. He referred to the need for a "Director at the county level with authority to implement common procedures and service to assure that service would be equal and complete in all areas" (Miami questionnaire, p. 14).

The similarity in the responses from the two categories of decentralized districts, those with more or less decentralization, suggest that general financial deficiencies are not a factor of decentralization but of citywide shortages and needs. The respondent from Atlanta, for example, noted that 80% of that city's current budget is spent on salaries (Atlanta questionnaire, p. 1). This percentage suggests that relatively little money is available for experimentation and innovation in educational services.

Educational Programs

On the issue of whether the creation of local districts would diminish the availability of a range of educational services, respondents generally agreed that there was no problem. Despite financial and other difficulties, most respondents tended toward the view that decentralized districts have been able to provide a full range of educational services (Table 3). The special educator from Atlanta was perhaps just a bit more enthusiastic and optimistic than the others when he stated that "each area . . . provides programs suitable to the needs

of the students residing in that area" (Atlanta questionnaire, p. 11). His response suggests affirmation of the hypothesis that decentralization allows for greater responsiveness to local or neighborhood needs. Most respondents seem to share the belief that decentralization has promoted diversity and administrative flexibility (Table 3). The Oakland respondent cited the following excerpt from that city's Master Plan Task Force on Decentralization and School Management:

> Decentralization has a decided effect on planned variability of programs. Emphasis on school autonomy, including parent involvement, plus regional structuring, makes it possible for personnel to know the individual schools and their needs more intimately (and vice versa). (Oakland questionnaire, p. 15)

Table 3

Special Educators' Responses to Selected Questions

City	Budget[a]	Education Services[b]	Diversity and Flexibility[c]	Close to Community[d]
Atlanta	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baltimore	—	—	Yes	Yes
Boston	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chicago	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Detroit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Los Angeles	Yes	—	—	No
Memphis	—	—	—	—
Miami	—	No	—	Yes
Minneapolis	—	—	—	—
Oakland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philadelphia	Yes	—	Yes	Yes

[a] Have budgetary problems had a negative effect on decentralization?

[b] Have the various subunits been able to provide a full range of educational services?

[c] Has decentralization resulted in program diversity and administrative flexibility?

[d] Has decentralization brought the schools closer to the community?

Source: Responses scattered throughout questionnaires.

Educators expressed their concern in only selected instances, however, that the diversity and variability encouraged by decentralization should not get out of hand. Citing the same report once again, the Oakland respondent noted the following:

> We believe that there should be encouragement of differences among regions . . . so that each regional unit develops its own program priorities and innovating practices. The widest possible leeway should be given to each region to take such action. However . . . such a possibility also creates the danger that healthy and helpful "competition" among regions could appear to be—and in fact might be—parochial rivalries. (Oakland questionnaire, p. 15)

Responsiveness to Local Needs

Eight of the 11 educators suggested that decentralization made it possible for schools to maintain sensitivity to community needs (Table 3). The respondent from Miami believed that decentralization had resulted in increased contacts between community groups and the district offices although there were no objective data to verify the belief (Miami questionnaire, p. 15). The Atlanta respondent noted that "programs have been provided closer to where students live" (Atlanta questionnaire, p. 15). Yet, he observed that although final decisions rest with area superintendents on what is to be or not be implemented, ". . . the public and frequently Board members look upon the central staff command as responsible for decision-making processes" (Atlanta questionnaire, p. 13). This response would indicate that people need time to alter their notions of the locus of power.

Table 4

Innovators in the System

City	Local District	Central Office Staff
Atlanta	—	X
Baltimore	X	X
Boston	X	X
Chicago	X	X
Detroit	X	—
Memphis	—	—
Miami	—	X
Minneapolis	—	—
Los Angeles	—	X*
Oakland	—	—
Philadelphia	—	X

*Stressed lack of evidence

Source: Questionnaire, question VIII-d.

Related to the issue of power is the perception of who are the primary innovators in a school system and where one can expect support for special education. Table 4 indicates that four respondents believed the primary source of change to be the central office staff; only one believed it to derive primarily from the local districts; and three believed that both units became more innovative as a result of decentralization. Three educators did not respond to the question.

It is of some interest that the respondent from Detroit (the only city with political decentralization of the schools) emphasized the innovativeness of the local districts. This innovativeness would suggest that the extent of power exercised by the local district, as compared to the central district, is a product of the degree of delegation of power to those districts. The evidence is limited, but it is supported by the responses of districts with administrative decentralization. They are less likely to recognize that changes have occurred or that flexibility has been achieved. This group naturally sees central bureaucracy as more innovative.

The question of the source of the pressure for decentralization and the potential for conflict is of some interest. Conflict is one of the out-

Table 5
Groups Involved in Decentralization Plan, and Presence of Conflict

City	Groups		Conflict	
	Inside System	External to System	Yes	No
Atlanta	X	X		X
Baltimore		X	X	
Boston	X	X		X
Chicago	X	X	X	
Detroit	X	X	X	
Los Angeles	X	X	X	
Memphis	X	X	X	
Miami	X		—	—
Minneapolis	X	X		X
Oakland	X			X
Philadelphia	X	X	X	

Source: Questionnaire, questions III-a and III-e.

puts of decentralization and it is often cited as a disadvantage of seeking such reform. The findings are given in Table 5. In all but three cities, forces both inside and outside the system were involved in developing the decentralization plan. The implications are important; as the Oakland respondent observed, the decentralization plan "was more of an edict rather than an unfolding realization brought about through a democratic process" (p. 3).

Furthermore, according to the respondents, some conflict occurred in the decentralization process; only four respondents excluded it as a factor. Nonetheless, many respondents suggested that such conflict was not of major significance. Unfortunately, the questionnaire once again seems problematic, that is, the respondents thought they were being asked about special education and not about the decentralization process in general. Since we are dealing with administrative decentralization, which is largely an internal process, we cannot consider the low level of reported conflict to be conclusive. It is more likely that conflict among the various participants heightens under political decentralization where the distribution of power is broadened, and the potential vested interests are greater.

Special Education and Decentralization

Although special educators have remained primarily under central control in most of the cities examined, five respondents (Miami, Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Atlanta) suggested that decentralization has somewhat affected special education operations. Tables 6 and 7 indicate that functions have remained either with the central office or have been shared; only six functions have been completely decentralized but in various combinations in only five cities. Insofar as control of special education has been affected by decentralization, therefore, it seems that more functions are *shared* than was the case in the past.

Needs assessment, program planning, and inservice education are the most frequently shared functions. Close in common concern and shared functions are program evaluation, parent/community relationships, record keeping, and staff development. Those areas that most often appear to be retained centrally are research, finance and resource development, and consultation. Parent/community relationships, pupil identification, and child study management are most often assigned locally (Table 6).

These results are compatible with a traditional reliance on central administration in special education. Many respondents advanced the belief that because special education had worked out well under cen-

Table 6

Central Office Functions in Special Education under Decentralization

Function	Retained by Central Office	Decentralized	Shared
Needs assessment	4		7
Program Planning and Organizing	3		7
Finance/Resource Development	8		3
Program Director and Supervisor	5	1	5
Consultation	7		3
Program Evaluation	3		6
Research	8		
Parent/Community Relationships	3	2	6
Record Keeping	4	1	6
Inservice Education	4		7
Pupil Identification	1	3	5
Child Study Mgnt.	3	3	5
Staff Development	4		6
Budgeting	5	1	4

Source: Questionnaire, question V. Memphis did not respond.

Table 7

Distribution of Functions* in Special Education at Different Levels, by City

City	Remained at Central Office	Decentralized	Shared
Atlanta	3	2	12
Baltimore	5	1	6
Boston	8	0	6
Chicago	2	6	5
Detroit	6	1	7
Los Angeles	9	0	5
Memphis	—	—	—
Miami	2	2	10
Minneapolis	17	0	2
Oakland	13	0	1
Philadelphia	4	0	11

*See Functions in Table 6.
Source: Questionnaire, question V.

tral direction, it should not be affected by the decentralization plan. When special education functions have been shared, however, the Atlanta respondent suggested, this system worked out quite well—"area staff and central office work closely together" (p. 10).

Most respondents do not believe decentralization has had much effect on EMR programs. Although changes in these programs are noted, generally they are not attributed to the initiation of decentralization. Only the Detroit and Chicago respondents suggested that decentralization has had such an effect—the Detroit respondent believed that there was "evidence of more interest on the part of the regions relative to special education programs" (p. 10). In Detroit, only the highly specialized programs for low-incidence handicaps have remained under central direction so it is understandable that change would be attributed to local districts.

In the responses to an overall evaluation of gains and losses of special education programs under decentralization one gets a sense of the issues involved (Table 8). Responses generally support the view that decentralization has encouraged greater involvement of local school personnel in special education needs, which, in turn, has enhanced the sensitivity to local needs. In some districts even without political decentralization (i.e., direct community involvement), increased community participation has developed in support of special education programs. Decentralization apparently does stimulate interest and ultimately response in innovative programs. Of considerable importance is the ability to relate directly to local needs and to limit the travel of special education children. There is, however, no real evidence to suggest a strong movement of special education children into mainstream programs except in one or two cities where the signs of such a thrust are just beginning. In contrast to these gains, losses are generally projected in relation to the general lack of financial support and the limited availability of special personnel for special education in local districts. Failing support for these students as a result of decentralization to the local district has not been evidenced, although it was anticipated by the respondents in districts where special education was maintained as a central function. Some of the main concerns under decentralization, inferior personnel selection and deterioration of standards, have apparently not materialized. It must be recognized, however, that in all but one district personnel practices remain a central or shared function. Another area of potential conflict —between professionals and community—is also not regarded as an issue, perhaps because community involvement is not a major input in these districts.

Table 8

Are Special Education Programs Becoming More Innovative Under Decentralization?

City	Yes	No
Atlanta		X
Baltimore	X	
Boston	X	
Chicago	X	
Detroit	X	
Los Angeles		X
Memphis	—	—
Miami	X	
Minneapolis	—	—
Oakland	—	—

Source: Questionnaire, question VI-c.

The evidence gathered by this questionnaire is suggestive rather than conclusive. It offers some interesting hypotheses that can be tested only by long-term experience and a wider range of experience. Whether the projected advantages and/or disadvantages of decentralization to special education will be lasting and even expanded can only be determined over the next decade. Whether increased support will be forthcoming because of continued local demands is yet to be determined. While innovation can be seen in several cities, the movement toward mainstream education is not yet evident. Far more important would be a comparison of how special education fares under political decentralization as opposed to forms of administrative decentralization and even to centralized systems. New York City, which was not included in the survey, is one of the two large cities to implement what could be defined as political decentralization. Only recently, after three years of experience, have serious questions been raised in some districts regarding the issue of special education and the need to include exceptional students in the mainstream of education. The experience in Detroit suggests a similar thrust in the districts. Clearly, more experience and time is essential for more meaningful analysis and evaluation. What can be said is that reorganization through decentralization has provided an environment in which change is more acceptable and in which emphasis is shifted from meeting citywide needs to responding to more local or neighborhood needs and demands.

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Reaction Panel

Louise Daugherty
Chicago, Illinois

Chicago has about 2500 professional people in special education. They are categorized in one of three bureaus: Mentally Handicapped, Physically Handicapped, and Socially Maladjusted. Social workers and psychologists are not in the Bureau of Special Education but in the Bureau of Pupil Personnel Services—in both the Chicago school system and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (State). The Chicago school system has been decentralized into three Areas, each headed by a Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education. A Director of the Bureau of Special Education is in the Central Office. The Director of Special Education works with Area Directors of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education in implementing special education programs in the various schools. Because the three Area Directors of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education, the Director of Special Education, and I have been friends of long standing, implementing decentralization was facilitated. Without this friendship, the process of decentralization could have resulted in serious misunderstanding. It would have been much more difficult if our model of decentralization had been implemented by persons who had never worked together.

At the time the Chicago school system started decentralizing, we were also in the throes of trying to implement a legislative mandate, passed in 1961, which stated that every child has a right to education. Consequently, special education faced a three-fold increase. Concurrently, we were working on a tuition program which allowed us to pay $2000 tuition for each child who was too handicapped to come into the public schools. Most people did not understand this tuition program and opposed it in every way they could. So the special education staff was faced with the task of trying to get that program started despite the opposition, expanding to implement the legislative mandate, decentralizing, and initiating a new curriculum all at one time. To make the understatement of the year, it was not easy.

Decentralization also meant a combination of certain functions in our Central Office. As Assistant Superintendent in charge of Special Education, my job expanded to include four additional bureaus. Cus-

tomarily, special education had been a sort of stepchild in the eyes of more prestigious bureaus. In some instances, these bureaus did not like being aligned with special education in the new department—Department of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education. Although our personal relationships were quite friendly, personnel in these bureaus resented being in the new department. So there was the job of bringing cohesion to the expanded department in the Central Office and working with new people in the decentralized areas.

Our area directors were not experienced administrators to the extent that most of us in the Central Office were. They had to learn the difference between line and staff. For example, never having headed large organizations of people, they had to learn that their roles did not consist solely of issuing orders to people. Staff people assigned as guidance consultants or special education consultants, who had been on the staffs of district superintendents formerly, were taken out of the 27 districts and assigned to one of three Areas.

In the beginning we felt that we were working in several separate school systems. We had Areas A, B, and C, the Central Office, Model Cities, and Government Funded Programs. Decentralization had been instituted to help the children but our multiple systems slowed down the process of getting exceptional children placed in classrooms. Yet our Areas were given more consulting help than had ever been possible under centralized operations: The number of consultants increased from five who had been in the Central Office to five in each of the three areas, a total of 15.

There were problems. To this day, the teachers, the public, the principals, and certain district superintendents feel that the problems should be solved downtown. They like the idea of coming downtown and taking up the time of the people there, even though the problems could be solved at a local school, district, or Area by personnel who have become quite competent as consultants. Still, people want to come downtown because that is where the television cameras are. So students continue to come downtown although the Area and district personnel are quite willing to meet with them.

I wish I could say that decentralization has taken the pressure from all of us at the Central Office. But it hasn't. By the time the people get to us, they are very, very angry, even when our answer is the same—even an affirmative answer—as that given to them in the Areas. They just prefer getting their answers from downtown. If you are the chairman of a committee, you have to report to your committee that you got your answer from downtown although the decision rests in the local Areas.

The fact that people are bringing their problems downtown does not mean that the personnel in the Areas are not doing their jobs.

When the questionnaire, "Special Education in Decentralized School Systems," was received, I called in my three colleagues and our Director of Special Education and said, "I think we should make this out so we get the responses from my level, from the centralized Director of Special Education, and from the three Area directors, because I think we could see them differently." And, indeed, we do. I asked only that they tell the truth and that they try not to gloss over things.

Some of the things which my colleagues in the Areas feel are very good, may be the things that we in the Central Office feel are very poor. For example, one response was made that we in the Central Office did not define our roles; but our roles were defined for us by management consultant teams that studied the school system in 1966 and concluded that Central Office should concentrate on planning while the field staff should take charge of the day-to-day operations and be concerned with the quality of instruction. When we look at them, we feel, "You should be out there in the classrooms, helping teachers. You should be doing this, you should be doing that, you should be picking up the statistics." When they look at us, they feel that we are not the first line of defense against the parents who want their children screened overnight; and they feel that they should replicate in the Areas what we do in the Central Office. When we get involved in planning, we may find that they have involved themselves in the planning also, and sometimes we find that they have different ideas entirely. For example, we in the Central Office may think that a certain out-school population should be brought in to use a building until some other placement is possible, whereas our Area staffs may feel the building should be used for a different population to relieve an overcrowded situation.

We still have some confusion about line and staff roles. In our situation, it is possible for a district superintendent to want a particular program while an Area director may feel that the program should not be implemented or a different program should be installed, and we in the Central Office may be taking a different line entirely. However, when we get together, we in the Central Office usually step backwards for the field staff. If we plan for a certain number of teaching positions to serve the needs of a number of children, field staff has the right to change the functions of those teachers. We had to get that straightened out. We have been spending several years learning how to work together.

One of our functions is to support our colleagues because on the staffs of the Area associates are four other directors, that is, the Director of Administration, Director of Curriculum, Director of Programs, and so on. Now the five directors on that staff do not necessarily see things alike. The four other directors may not be committed to special education as the important program which should be developed. So many times, we have to throw our weight behind our Area Directors of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education and say, "If this is going on out there you are not getting the support you need, we are going to give our support down here and see that you get what you need in your Area to do things for pupil services and special education."

In terms of decentralization, I can say, "I accept it but in our system it hasn't gone far enough." If we went one step further and put our support people on the staff of the district superintendent, the Areas would be freed directly from a lot of the paper work and coordination they are doing now, and they would be giving a thrust toward getting to the district superintendents what the district superintendents need to have quality programs in special education.

I think we will not be going back to centralization. I would not recommend the step because, having gone through decentralization, I do not think it should be reversed. So, as we go forward, we know we have a number of problems with paper, communications, human frailty, a difference in the educational and experiential levels of the Central Office and Area staffs, and numerous others which can be brought into focus. The fact remains that when the Castro-Avery-Terrell survey team was coming, I could place three calls in a hurry and say, "Can you come downtown tomorrow to meet a team that is going to study us?" and have the Area and Central Office staffs turn up to ask what they could do to help. This friendship and cooperation will, I know, lead to benefits for the children.

Jerry C. Gross
*La Grange, Illinois**

My reaction to what seems to be the controversial topic of administrative decentralization in relation to Great City Special Education organizations, is remindful of a reaction I have had to other is-

*At the time of the conference, Dr. Gross was the Assistant Director of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis, Minn.

sues special education struggles with. This reaction was nicely characterized by Irving in *Tales of a Traveler*, when he observed,

> There is a certain relief in change even though it be from bad to worse; as I have found in traveling in a stagecoach, it is often a comfort to shift one's position and be bruised in a new place.

Certain changes in special education, whether it be from manualism to oralism as a teaching strategy for the hearing impaired, or from psychoeducational to operant conditioning as an instructional methodology for the emotionally disturbed, are stimulated by that which motivated Irving to shift positions during stagecoach travel. The parallel in our case is that student outcomes, the ultimate measure of our effectiveness in special education, may not change so much from our selection of a centralized vs decentralized administration as from factors related to our enthusiasm for a new model that at once eliminates many of the complex and troublesome problems associated with the old model.

In summary, then, our ability to conduct a quality special education effort within large, city school districts may or may not be affected directly by a centralized or decentralized administrative arrangement. Under certain circumstances, quality programs could be vended through either of these administrative arrangements. I would, however, suggest that certain unique qualities within districts may call for a centralized vs a decentralized administrative arrangement or vice versa.

One index is the size of the school population. In Minneapolis, for example, it would be all but impossible to administratively decentralize our low-incidence programs. Although we have 60,000 public school students and serve as a catchment area for 17 suburban districts, certain low-incidence programs require one centralized service facility. Our ability to serve these severely handicapped students would be impaired dramatically if we had to divide the programs into several self-contained, decentralized subunits. We could not, in this circumstance, afford enough support personnel for each decentralized district that would operate separate programs for each low-incidence category. Such support personnel as audiologists, psychologists, diagnosticians, and other specialized staff are not even in adequate supply in our centralized model and they would be even less so in a decentralized system. I am aware of several cases in which urban areas have attempted to decentralize their special education programs and encountered difficulties with respect to the low-incidence programing. Even given infinite budgets for low-incidence programing, the cost effectiveness of these programs in districts under 100,000 school-aged

population would undoubtedly receive low marks, not to mention the problems teachers would have establishing homogenous instructional groups.

It has, however, been possible for us to decentralize our mainstream special education efforts without creating unmanageable side effects. In fact, mainstream efforts are in many respects better operated within a decentralized system. The reason is that our mainstream efforts are designed primarily to impact on building level instructional services. In this connection, our ability to create change in the local building programs is best accomplished when decisions regarding referral and placement, methods and material use, and role and responsibility for collaborative efforts between regular and special educative teachers to service a mildly handicapped child are made as "close" to the building as possible.

These decentralized mainstream efforts depend in large measure on the maintenance of strong centralized leadership for fiscal and program accountability and for the development of citywide philosophy and policy statements. The real danger for decentralization, other than in the super-cities of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, is the fragmentation of philosophy, policy, and service delivery structure, perhaps.

Another important question we must address when thinking about decentralization vs centralization of administration and service delivery in special education is whether one system or another improves our ability to reach the objectives for any given special education division. For example, does one system make it easier for us to reduce the labeling requirements for certain handicapped children? Does one system or another create conditions that allow for the development of better systems for insuring the due process rights of the handicapped? Does one system or another allow and stimulate closer parent-school partnerships relative to programs for handicapped students? Other questions that might be considered relate to the impact of a decentralized vs a centralized arrangement on our ability to evaluate program efficacy, on our ability to effect change in legislation for the handicapped, and on our ability to use parent groups as change agents within the schools.

To date, I have not seen evidence to suggest that our division objectives could be better met in a decentralized model. We have seen evidence at this conference, as well as in our own district, to suggest that a strongly centralized special education administration is the most effective way of insuring continued effective leadership and that with the exception of selected mainstream efforts our programs would suffer in terms of quality and cost effectiveness if we were to decentralize our division structure.

Al Tudyman
Oakland, California

Compared with the population giants of education—Detroit with 270,000 children, Chicago with half a million over that, Los Angeles with 726,000, Philadelphia with 480,000, and Houston with 230,000—the Oakland school system with only 56,000 children is a midget. Although we all use the same language in discussing our school systems, the words have different meanings because of the school population differentials that result in not only different problems but degrees of severity of similar problems.

In comparison with my peers in those population giants, however, I think I am pretty lucky. We have a centralized special education program in Oakland that permits us to do things many of you might like to duplicate in your large districts: I still see children every day; I sit in on some of the A & D Committees; I go out and visit the schools; and I see every severely handicapped child before he is placed. We have our own $8 million budget. Comparatively, this budget is small to some of the larger districts; the Los Angeles special education budget probably is many times that, as are the budgets in New York and Chicago. We are still a family. We have 350-400 special education teachers and we all know each other. We are a close-knit family which, we suppose, is what you would like to see in all those decentralized districts in your larger cities. There is no need to decentralize special education in Oakland because we are really a small school district—smaller in total size than most of the regions in larger districts.

The Oakland regular school system is decentralized. However, special education is not decentralized at present. Some of the problems which were discussed here are duplicated even in a relatively small district such as Oakland. The system was decentralized from the top with a lot of support from a number of new people in the district. There are now a number of "top dogs" and they are all supporting decentralization. They may remain in the system as long as they support it in whatever form it is organized. Decentralization has been in effect for two-and-one-half years.

Some of you have heard of our tragedy—a superintendent was assassinated. We do not know what the residual effect will be; we will probably get a new superintendent and we do not know if the organization will be changed as a result.

We do not want special education to be decentralized in Oakland because we know that sooner or later it would have to be put back together again.

During the discussion of Dr. Gittell's paper, one could have felt that he was sitting in on a political science course. One could have wondered how an educational sociologist would have analyzed decentralization in terms of its educational implications. As one listened to some of Dr. Gittell's terms—"definition," "participation," "decision making," "communicating," "sharing," "community control," "delegation of power," "exercising power," "centralization," "decentralization," "regionalization," "innovation," and "evaluation," one realized that we would have to define all of those terms because they could not mean the same thing to each person. We could be compared to the United Nations delegates who use the same words but with many different meanings or connotations.

While each of us, no doubt, has been exposed to the word "decentralization" for some time, this meeting probably has taught us that the more we get to know about it the less we know, and the more we have to learn. It made one very humble. Future discussions about decentralization will no doubt elicit accurate definitions of the concept before discussing its merits and demerits. We do not seem to have yet a common definition of the word, decentralization.

Let me turn now to the questionnaire, "Special Education in Decentralized City School Systems." It seemed to be geared more to the decentralization of regular school systems than of special education. From what we have heard here, more special education systems are *not* decentralized than are, even though they are in systems that may be totally decentralized as far as the regular school program is concerned.

Although Dr. Gittell indicated that decentralized operations are more costly than centralized operations, I understood her to say that she felt it is very difficult to analyze the costs of decentralization. One feels that cost is probably one of the easier things to estimate because of the dollar figures which are put in and which one can obtain. It seems that when one adds more districts with replicated personnel, the cost figures will be higher.

Longitudinal studies of decentralization appear to be a commendable idea, but we should also do some longitudinal studies of many other topics, such as, what is the best method of teaching deaf children? or, what is a better way of measuring children's progress than marks or tests? etc. These are the kinds of questions that confound us all the time. Things seem to change so fast in education that if we do not get the answer to a problem immediately, the problem is lost and replaced by different ones. In our demand for instant panaceas, good solutions get watered down until their concepts seem to be lost.

In my professional life, during the past 35 years, I have gone through some of these "panaceas": progressive education, heterogeneous grouping, homogeneous grouping, nature-nurture, individualized instruction, track systems, scientific education, humanistic psychology, etc. I can recall when B. F. Skinner was a "no-no" in educational psychology but now his theories are accepted—at least for the time being.

Dr. Gittell commented that change is best achieved by local initiative. One can hardly refute this concept. However, one can feel that there is a certain syndrome in decentralization which, once it gets going, is very difficult to stop until the bottom falls out or success is attained. There is also a halo effect. When one thinks of all the staff that must be added because of decentralization and of their resulting obligations and dedication to the concept, one knows that whatever is said about decentralization reflects their stake—a big stake—in it. In other words it has a tendency to perpetuate itself.

The discussion about whether decentralization should start with local initiative or administrative edi , was very interesting. At times one felt like a pendulum swinging from side to side. Our most successful innovations in special education probably originated at the grass roots but unless someone at the top said, "This is the way it is going to be," the innovations would never have occurred. The people had to come to the top staff to implement their ideas. On the other hand, sometimes the top staff get an idea they would like to incorporate in the system but unless they get the cooperation and permission of the people at the grass roots, it cannot be implemented successfully.

Some of the effects or differences of decentralization of the regular program on the still centralized special education organization over the past two years have, by empirical analysis, been as follows: Communication has become more complex and difficult; it has become a big effort to keep special education services equally available throughout the regions; some children with handicaps seem to get "lost"; referrals are often haphazard; a central cumulative record system of handicapped children is being slowly destroyed because current status of the children is not being routinely or currently entered; proficiency of ancillary personnel, such as psychologists, becomes less accountable; the "Peter's Principle" with some of the decentralized personnel is in effect; special education allotments to regions are difficult to budget control; placement of children is sometimes unduly delayed; etc. One must remember that to administratively decentralize a district of 56,000 pupils in over 100 schools into three regions results in quite small areas of operation. To divide special education into three separate regions would be administrative folly and either produce

exorbitant costs in replicating special education leadership and staff in each region or water down the personnel to include various duties other than special education, thus relegating special education functions to an inferior status; in either case, neither is desirable.

If our main goal is to change the system per se, perhaps we ought not to leave it to educators but to get in the change experts. Perhaps political or social scientists are the ones to teach us how to accomplish changes. Otherwise, we will act like a group of amateurs: trying to reach a goal through coincidence or accident.

Summary of Discussion

Observation. I would like to make a couple of observations about the process of changing educational organization. If the objective is systemwide change, community control or decentralization is an inappropriate strategy. The latter is the strategy to allow for differences. The rationale for decentralization is that there is some benefit in diversity and it should be maximized. To me, systemwide change implies universalism and if that is your goal, the process needs to be centralized.

In systemwide change or change in a particular region, building, or classroom, the critical factor, as in other organizational change, is whether those persons who are expected to change will in fact be involved in the process of change. Unless teachers are committed to change, change is very difficult to bring about in the classroom.

Now the strategy of political decentralization—community control—relies upon building problem-solving relationships among all the persons who are partners in a particular problem. It is possible to identify problems that are common to the building and to sort out the various role relationships that are involved in solving them.

Response: I would say that educational change is difficult without the involvement of the entire system. It takes more than just building involvement. It takes the cooperation of the college or university preservice training, administrative and union support, materials and supply subsystems, and funding.

Observation: Yet the principal and teachers in a school building could learn about something like individualized instruction and apply it in the classrooms without people in the downtown office ever hearing about it.

Response: That kind of change is swallowed up very quickly. The downtown office controls the kind of text books that can be used in the school so the building personnel are limited in the amount of change that can be introduced.

Question: Does Dr. Reynolds consider decentralization and mainstreaming congruent? Does he think decentralization has a greater capability for mainstreaming than centralization?

Reynolds: From the viewpoint of a child, if you create the capacity to deal with him effectively in his neighborhood school or what is the normal school for him, you reduce the referral rate out to more central kinds of resources. He gets a larger portion of his program in what is for him his natural environment. That is almost what

I mean by mainstreaming, that is, an ecology of exceptionality in his natural environment with the other children of the neighborhood.

Observation: Prior to the advent of our administrative decentralization, mainstreaming was accomplished to a very substantial extent while the school district was highly centralized. I fail to see the necessary correlation between administrative decentralization and mainstreaming. I think mainstreaming can occur in either situation. The critical variable would be acceptance of the youngsters at the local level; you gain that acceptance through a very substantial program for, first of all, administrators. When the administrators accept mainstreaming, your goal is realized. Without it, it does not make any difference into how many administrative areas you break your school district for mainstreaming will not necessarily follow.

Reynolds: This case may be one of those mentioned by Dr. Gittell in which you do not have a zero-sum situation. In fact, it may require a very definite central action in order to create the resourcefulness in the local school situation that, from the viewpoint of the child at least, makes available to him a more decentralized experience. I would think that for effective community control, the people in the community would have to develop some awarenesses and skill and to command certain instrumentalities. One possible approach would be for central administrators who are committed to mainstreaming to commit themselves to the creation of the necessary instrumentalities, such as the retraining of the teachers. But the main object is the expanded awareness, the expanded capacity, to deal with problems in a decentralized way.

Observation: It may be simplistic to say this but I think it makes a difference whether you have centralization or administrative decentralization. Grass roots people must be involved in the planning for and implementation of mainstreaming. Without central leadership, however, children have no advocate. Grass roots people, at this stage, at least, are not aware of placement possibilities or of the wide range of services to help children. Certainly the grass roots people must be involved but special education people must be involved also as leaders and advocates. Mainstreaming and decentralization can work together.

We also must have options and alternative programs for getting children into mainstreaming very quickly. We also need protected monies for special education. With both contingencies, in the long run it does not matter whether you are centralized or decentralized.

The role of the special educator—special education division—is changing. A major facet of the new role is leadership advocacy. Lead-

ership advocacy must make its influence felt in the local buildings and in the community. Under decentralization we would hope that the people—parents—will become more aware of the needs of handicapped and gifted children and will press for them and see that the funds keep flowing to make services for these children possible. We would hope that better informed teachers will be accepting pupils with special needs in their classrooms and that principals will support them.

But we have to do the same kind of job with our top echelon—our board of education, superintendent, and associates—who can help us do the right kind of job. Certain resources will have to flow for such things as personnel offices and transportation offices, for example, in big city systems. Very powerful individuals are all around to help us get the job done but we must help this group of people also. We must help them to see the needs of and give support to the special education services. When the field needs more teachers, more counseling help, and more job coordinating services, we must get the responses from the people in charge that will make these resources available.

Response: I cannot see regular educators responding through the goodness of their hearts to the needs of special education and exceptional children when it takes 10 or 5 or 3 times as much money to educate them. I think it is wishful thinking to think exceptional children will be given first priority.

Observation: Don't you believe you can have a community that will work that hard for all the children, irrespective of whether they are emotionally disturbed or handicapped in another way? I have seen a great difference over several years in the way people think about children with special needs. I have seen parents in a district in which there never was any talk about mental health needs begin to pound away and say, "We must have discussions every year about mental health because most of our children, at some point or other, have some trouble or problem. We must have help with them; we need more counselors; we need more psychologists; and we need more special services." I feel that parents can become just as active for those resources as for more books, better teachers, and more sensitive principals.

Response: I agree, but unless you pinpoint the money it will be used for everything but handicapped kids. A report from Philadelphia indicated that over a thousand EMR kids were not placed because you could not get them in classes. Now what did the regular educators do to try to get these children into programs?

Response: In the two years that Philadelphia has been struggling with the right to education, there has been a marked change in

attitude toward the previously non-attendant population. When we started, people were saying that it is impossible to have children with this degree of difference and appearance brought into the schools. They said we did not have teachers equipped to handle them and did not have the staff; children would reject them; and parents would not want them in the schools. Yet today, over a thousand children with all these differences and difficulties for teachers are in the schools with increasing acceptance. In some instances, people are saying, "Why were our eyes closed so long, why shouldn't these children have services too?" Attitude change is possible.

Avery: We did find in Philadelphia that there were some regular educators who preferred special education. I am not sure where that commitment came from.

Observation: The resistance to exceptional children normally came from regular educators more than the community, which was not knowledgeable at all. Now that we have a mechanism for reaching the community, it is easy because the community is composed essentially of parents and children. When they realize that the child you are talking about is one like theirs, possibly poor, possibly from a minority group, who also may be blind, or deaf, or crippled, they come along quickly. The resistance frequently was from the principal who did not want this kind of kid in his school, or who was not reaching out to the parents saying, "We should be serving all kinds of kids."

We have gotten more cooperation from general educators in the last two years than ever before. All of the handicapped children are not fully integrated because some of them are extreme. But we do not have them grouped by categories. They are grouped by particular needs. To the degree that the handicapped children can fit into that regular population, they are mainstreamed. It has taken a tremendous amount of leadership and outreach, a lot of hands, and a lot of people.

Observation: Several ingredients can be used to establish mainstreaming. One that we found very effective is providing the regular classroom teachers with the support they need, that is, the ancillary services and special education teachers. Second, we found that the laws, the legislation, and the litigation make real good instruments to wave in their faces to motivate them into thinking in the direction of mainstreaming. Third, we use the community—parent groups and citizens council, for example. Again, these factors mainly help us to achieve attitudes. Each of us has his own definition but to me, mainstreaming is a cooperative enterprise, a sharing of the responsibilities of decision making on how these kids will be mainstreamed in the school.

Decentralizing the Administration of Special Education in Large City Public Schools: Strategies and Considerations

Mark R. Shedd
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Connecticut[1]

Experts have the interesting capacity to tell people things they already know. You certainly do not need an expert to tell you about the complexity of special education problems in the great cities of America. Individually and collectively, you represent your own best expertise. Each of your cities is indeed different and with a unique blend of complications in the area of special education. However, we are searching here for some common elements. We can raise shared questions and use each other as resources for what must ultimately be each one's special solutions. I hope my remarks will provoke the collaborative discussion that will lead to that end.

For any administrater in public schools, the mix of special education and decentralization suggests multiple choices. The delivery of services to children in need of special education is a challenge, and a changing challenge. Their numbers are significant. Although you know the figures, the percentages, for your own city, the estimate of a national group approaching 3 million is a large number of individuals. Classification procedures are changing and under scrutiny. The likelihood that a student who is poor in monetary terms or whose first language is not English will be classified as in need of "special" education is diminishing, as are other stigmatizing aspects of labeling. However, a variety of administrative problems first surface when one is attempting to meet individual needs while de-labeling the child with the need. In a system which is partially or totally decentralized, the assignment of children to special education classes or programs has the potential to vary from district to district, according to diagnosis

[1]Dr. Shedd was a Visiting Professor in Education at Harvard University at the time of the conference.

and interpretation of the handicap. Assignment to special education facilities is not necessarily uniform in a highly centralized system but the logistical implications of decentralization start with classification.

The history of special education has been discussed elsewhere. What is of interest is the impetus for change, the process of decentralization. For some time now, urban school systems have absorbed shock after shock; discontinuity and confusion have become pervasive. The name of the game seems to be change and it has its consequences. In previous years the push for the centralization of special education programs seemed to have a rationale. Economies of scale and the need for specialization led many systems to clump their special education facilities and resources. Now the situation is quite different; urban administrators are forced to challenge earlier assumptions about the desirability of centralized programs for the exceptional child.

The present move toward decentralization in large cities has tremendous implications for the administration of special education and they are further compounded by the growing demand and, in some instances, the statutory requirement, to mainstream handicapped children. These demands, these legislated imperatives and court orders, have given an urgency to what many regard as a philosophical rightness—the mainstreaming of all children, that is, the provision for individualized and more normalized instruction within local school settings. The burden of proof now seems to be placed on those who wish to isolate the exceptional children and to indicate that the benefits of isolation outweigh a number of documented costs to children, parents, and community. Pressure on administrators, however, works both ways. Administrative centralization or decentralization does not necessarily mean isolation versus mainstreaming. They are two entirely separate concepts. But when a large-city school system is told to accomplish both objectives at the same time the complexities become tremendous.

Nonetheless, these legislative and court ordered changes are upon us. The requirement to decentralize is a fact for 14 of the 23 systems represented at the conference. Some systems are presently working to decentralize special education programs after the fact, as it were, without the benefit of planning time. In addition, it is not atypical for legislation to be passed without funding to implement the desired outcomes. Where does one begin to sort out the variables, to begin to conceptualize the problem?

A series of questions comes to mind as we think of enumerating the differing aspects of special education activities in a system that has moved to or is moving toward decentralization. The enumeration of these questions constitutes a preliminary strategy for dealing with the entire issue.

What information is critical? What does one need to know before one even considers, let alone designs or implements, the decentralization of special education programs? The first point is obvious to the degree of distraction—what is special education? In most systems it is an informational problem, a fact that most people at a district or local level are simply unaware of the nature, scope, and dimensions of special education activities. The dissemination of information is essential before multiple dialogues can begin.

What are desired and necessary services for the children of a large city? What are the present or former levels of services provided through the central office and corollary centralized programs? What, at the first cut, would one presume to be the new and evolving functions at a district level? What are individual district capabilities and characteristics? How do previously determined or already-in-existence districts differ from one another? What are central office capabilities, particularly in the area of support services, such as leadership training? What areas should be included in the inventory of information we need to know as we consider the problem?

Scanning the organizational charts of different urban school systems reveals different decentralization models and structures. As one considers the different problems arising from the decentralization of special education services, it is helpful to establish the history and context of decentralization efforts in that particular system, with specific attention to social, political, and organizational costs and benefits. How did the central office adapt to decentralization issues in other program areas? For the decentralization of special education, an array of technical, managerial, and organizational changes is required. Have there been precedents? Can special education problems be inferred from previous experience with decentralization? One can posit a need to tip the school organization over on its side to let the special education functions fall out and then to determine the other functions of the system with which special education might be interdependent.

It is important to emphasize the need for an orderly process if one is to decentralize special education functions. There is a strong rationale for systematic analysis of the problem and the development of a staged process for accomplishing the objectives of the system. Systems analysts, planners, legal experts, budget analysts, and material and transportation managers are necessary to assist those principals, district superintendents, and special education experts who are involved with the design and implementation of such a new program. In the re-ordering of the special education structure and services of any city, one must anticipate the consequences of change that occurs too rapidly. Special education is an area particularly sensitive to mismanage-

ment and a transition period must be developed with care and precision. Those involved in the enterprise might employ a problem-solving approach to determine a reasonable time line, perhaps something on the order of a 3-5 year staged process. Speed may not be of the essence in making an effective transition for children whose exceptional problems may be exacerbated by breakdowns in service or by an inadequate or poorly implemented program.

I propose the metaphor of an Internal and External game plan for the implementation of a different special education structure. The Internal Plan would involve great care in planning and design, and those who will later support and defend the rules and policies participate in their formulation. Change in special education procedures produces heat, pressures, and counter pressures, and those who must withstand those pressures must understand and be committed to a scheme that they feel is best for the system and each child. Planning is a luxury but it is essential to develop a clear policy statement, and to enunciate the program and assignments that a central administrative group and, indeed, an entire administrative structure will support and value. The Internal Plan deals with those people in the system whose work will be affected or changed with the decentralization of special education services. Teachers, individually, in groups, and in the unions, will also be affected, as will be custodians. It may be preferable to have some decisions made in a "meet and confer" or collaborative fashion, rather than to wait for grievances, litigation, or appeal to determine if specific duties are legitimate for those people in the organization who are asked to perform them.

An External Plan involves a planning period to develop a constituency for a plan and to provide a chance to develop liaison with parent groups and local associations, such as the Association for Retarded Children. It is useful to think of the different components of each constituency, such as groups concerned with "learning disabilities," and other visible and invisible conglomerations of individuals whose advice and support is appreciated. The External Plan includes the newspapers and electronic media, with information, preparation, and requests for support from columnists, reporters, editors, video news teams, and others.

The state department of education may provide some spiritual if not pecuniary support and guidance; and a local university, particularly if it is a teacher training center, may contain some academic expertise for private or public consumption. Local politicians, from ward leaders on up, are likely to have a stake in the program, and touching base with congressional representatives enables them to consider a program before reacting.

Other External considerations include the unique nature of subsidy reimbursements for special education programs, with different information flows, different time schedules, and alternate kinds of management information systems requirements. It is a federal concern if there is a national movement towards altering existing arrangements in special education, with needs for additional training and staff for large numbers of teaching and support positions.

It is in regard to such logistics as adequate staffing that the planning period becomes particularly important; or the lack of it, an impediment to consistent change. The development of plans for staffing classes, matching teachers to numbers, and developing personnel to man the instructional system are both necessary and feasible. That development might take time and a system should think out its needs in terms of contracting with other institutions to retrain teachers or of developing capacities within itself to train and retrain them. Accordingly, one explores the relations between federal and state special education money, in addition to Title I, teacher training, and federally funded research.

The problem of accurate and useful data in special education services is a significant one for any city system, particularly as decentralization may require new evaluation techniques and procedures for students, teachers, and administrators. The entire area of evaluation, programmatic and otherwise, is a ranking agenda item for a planning period.

Movement from planning to implementation frequently poses a variety of organizational problems for administrators at all levels in the system. Among these problem areas in the specific context of the decentralization of special education services is the delineation and realignment of functions and responsibilities. Believing that the ultimate goal of a management system is to meet individual needs, one guesses that certain systemwide policies might not be appropriate at a local school level. Accordingly, the objective is to develop widespread capacities at a district level to deal with the requirements of individual schools, so that each child in need of a special educational experience gets the experience and corollary services and supports.

How does the district best assume its new roles? What is the role of the district superintendent in regard to special education? If the district superintendent takes on major new responsibilities, how does he or she develop a new relationship with the associate superintendent for special education? How does one establish district-level support teams?

Questions such as these must be dealt with openly and specifically. For example, before it is possible physically to place support teams in

a district and to establish their organizational responsibilities, it may be necessary to provide leadership training for the district superintendent and his/her staff. One would argue that the primary responsibility of those working at the district level is to the district superintendent and the secondary responsibility, to the central office. However, if past organizational ties and loyalties have traditionally flowed to the downtown office, there may be needed a process by which those in the district can build a sense of collective responsibility and mold a new "teaming" set of relationships.

For central office staff, the role changes in a decentralization process may be even more dramatic. Individuals formerly charged with special education responsibilities in a centralized structure may now have to switch roles and work out new arrangements at a district level. If one starts with a highly centralized structure and special education program, it may be more helpful to think of strengthening the program by distributing power and delegating responsibility rather than of breaking up the central source of decision making. The top management team needs to reassess the role of the central office in terms of the kinds of *support* it can provide. For example, while the central office will be compelled to give up some of its managing capability, in a decentralized situation it may need to retain some sort of auditing capability, a function that is most usefully performed by the central office.

Before a system begins to make decisions on the functions to be retained by the central office, however, it is necessary to get to the core of the decentralization experience in special education as in other programs. Available experience suggests that decentralization can occur in name or fact. What makes the difference is *resource allocation*. Most school people realize that power without money is powerlessness. In the decentralization of special education, responsibility without authority or accountability without discretionary power are stumbling blocks and hazards. It is critical to let resources go where the accountability lies.

The top priority management task in decentralization issues is to confront the problem of resource allocation and to work out an equitable system in which accountability for and direction of resources flow out in pupil accounting and pupil services. In particular, the requirements for psychological services will be different because, in addition to the more traditional types of testing, evaluation, and counseling, the individuals providing the psychological support will need to become more proactive in a program role. Exceptional children require a different array of psychological services and psychologists will have

additional functions from school to district office level. Accordingly, the district superintendent will have greater need for particular technical support, such as diagnosis and therapy.

The decentralization of special education influences budget planning and financial management at a district level and increases the dimensions of an evaluation program. One may anticipate the addition of numbers of exceptional students who were formerly invisible and outside the system. Providing services for unknown numbers demands good "guesstimates" and calls again for a paced planning and implementation period.

The program content of special education will force district level administrators to make other choices. The low-incidence areas of exceptionality that require sophisticated and expensive facilities are generally difficult to deal with in single schools or even districts. Should diagnostic services be centralized or itinerant? How does one provide for the uniform evaluation and placement of exceptional children in a broadly decentralized system? How does one approach space utilization? Make decisions about available space and potential trade-offs? For certain special education programs, is it more realistic and cost efficient for a central office to produce materials needed at a district level? How does a central administrator match the needs of different district directors or superintendents, particularly if they have differing levels of awareness about special education program needs, or different resources available in their districts to meet those needs?

On a district level, how does one develop coordinated staffing patterns for exceptional children, especially if those teachers or therapists coming out of a centralized situation cannot be equally distributed? The requirements of low-incidence vs high-incidence exceptionality may be unequally distributed in certain districts, and program needs vary with the incidence.

Just as one might argue for a sustained planning period, so would one wish for a sustained and measured implementation or transition period. Some systems have had the luxury of prolonged planning and implementation, while others have had to act after the fact. The rate of transition from a centralized system, which has traditionally grouped or clustered exceptional students, to a decentralized system, which aims at mainstreaming almost all children, is of critical importance. It is organizationally sound as well as humane for teachers and students not to get lost in the change, not to lose services in the haste to make the transition. There is a spectrum of new relations that demand attention, new relations between schools and new classrooms, new areas for the education of children with handicaps. Teachers in the schools will need to work through ways of working together and to

develop coordination among so-called "regular" classroom teachers, remedial teachers, and special education teachers. Administrators might consider the value of developing contingency plans to structure interim relationships. If a former special education center is to be closed and its classes assigned back to local schools, one can anticipate extremely complex logistical, managerial, and human problems. There is a real need for lead time, for administrative choices, teacher preparation, and community understanding.

The thoughts outlined above have a number of training implications. The former central office staff must think about ways it can work at a district level to maximize its individual and collective expertise. Those at a district level need to train staff to incorporate new programs and they should devise effective ways of working with one another. Principals may need training on some of the substantive issues of special education—what it is and what they need to know about children and the parents of exceptional children who will be coming into their schools in a "mainstream" program. Principals will need to consider not only their attitudes toward special education and the handicapped but the attitudes of their staff. They will need support to re-orient their staffs to a variety of new programs. Perhaps they would consider some generalized training for teachers on the broad nature and aspects of retardation and handicaps to give them a general orientation to the several fields of exceptionality. In addition, they would need to think about devising a support system within the school to tailor the needs of individual teachers and students. In a sense, it is like planning for racial desegregation.

Legal classification issues and some of the implications of classification involving parental notification and involvement are among the content areas for support and training for staff and teachers. Apart from the issue of labeling, one might anticipate a need to educate "regular" students about exceptionality. Our culture has become adept at hiding people with handicaps or those who are particularly different from most of us; we sequester individuals whom we judge to have problems. For children who are not acquainted with the broad range of orthopedic, sight, and speech and hearing disorders, and the varieties of retardation or emotional disturbance, the entrance of exceptional children into the school environment may have a profound effect. If the isolation of special education students begins to end, one might anticipate something like culture shock, not only for them but for their less-handicapped peers. Some value issues are at stake in the kind of welcome and environment the school can provide.

If an agreed-upon aim is to keep special education students minimally isolated, the impact of the aim on the broader population will

have definite implications for other programs and the life of the school. The isolation issue is a critical one; one finds different arguments about the persuasiveness of positions advocating isolation. For some low-incidence handicaps that need a highly specialized staff for treatment, there may be reasons or circumstances to develop a regional program or facility. There are trade-offs in the consideration of such a program, as individual or paired schools cannot replicate facilities for small numbers of children who may require intensive residential experience for severe orthopedic handicaps. The goal, however, is mainstreaming, to provide for each student maximum associations in normal situations.

To achieve this goal, teachers will need to deal with classification and stigmatizing associations. They will need to acquire new skills and transfer old ones. Parents will also need assistance in adapting to different conditions. It is not uncommon for groups of parents, whose children fall into an exceptional category, to have worked together to develop extensive facilities for their children. If parents have developed an emotional commitment to a special school and then are faced with losing it, one may anticipate resistance to a new school experience, particularly if that school has a "poor" image. It is useful to work with parents in their reactions to new resources, and for teachers, administrators, and planners to make use of the expertise and insights of parents' organizations.

Some parents' groups are different from others. Parents who conceive of special education as a means of isolating disorderly children or who view exceptional children as strange or unruly, may consider the introduction of special education programs into neighborhood schools to be undesirable. These parents need to be educated.

A whole range of implementation problems above and beyond the need for training and establishing communication among administrators, teachers, and parents surface in the decentralization of special education programs. In bilingual education, for example, it is important to explore the relations between language problems and special education classification. One needs a concentrated, programmatic effort to diagnose and then to provide appropriate bilingual special education and regular programs. Other areas on the fringe of school activities are health information programs, such as campaigns to eradicate lead paint and to diminish the number of students likely to develop conditions or possess handicaps that demand special education services. A higher percentage of babies born to teenage mothers is likely to enroll in special education programs. One can plan for such possibilities.

There may be hidden costs in the maintenance of facilities for exceptional children and problems in adapting physical plants to deal with some disabilities. The teachers' union or association may have adopted positions on the nature of teacher duties or in respect to changes in working conditions. Also, administrators must consider the issues of transfers, transferability, and seniority for teachers to work with special education programs. Custodians may feel that the presence of special education programs in the schools may alter some of their duties, and there may be a need to establish a dialogue about such issues. Other areas to consider are bus routes and schedules, and insurance, fire laws, and the like in the minutiae of administrative detail.

At the heart, however, is *attitude*. The basic questions are how people will work together in new situations, their desires to form new congenial and collaborative relationships, and their abilities to provide services and experiences for children who formerly attended school in isolation within the regular school context. Attitudinal change will affect the goals of each group with an interest in special education programs, and the reorganization of an administrative structure for special education will depend on the ability of individuals to work with one another. Whatever the managerial format for the decentralization of special education, we can deal with it in a more effective and humane way if we plan wisely and carefully. Whether the attitude change should come before or after the environmental and behavioral changes is, I suspect, an individual matter.

Reaction Panel

Marechal-Neil E. Young
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

As we listened to Dr. Shedd, I know you were aware of what it must have been like to serve in a school system in which the superintendent had such a strong commitment to humanizing education and, also, such strong feeling that change should begin with children, parents, community, teachers, and principals. Dr. Shedd gave district superintendents the support that made them willing to risk change and to attempt some of the innovations and different procedures that they were developing with their principals, teachers, and community.

Special education was a very important area for development and change. Most educable retarded pupils were assigned to isolated special classes and special centers. This traditional manner of servicing exceptional children had been approved by the board of education. However, in the early 1970's the board of education supported the development of a new policy requiring that as many children as could profit from the plan be included in regular schools and classes. At the present time, with momentum from the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children's right to education decree, mainstreaming is one of the major objectives to improve education for some mildly retarded pupils.

I would like to point out that the commitment to administrative decentralization and the mainstreaming of educable retarded pupils is not uniform among our administrative and instructional staff. Consequently, it is essential that special educators provide the leadership to develop the understandings necessary for building that commitment.

Among the steps that we have taken is to improve communication with principals, teachers, all staff members, and parents in the districts. Another step is to involve the administrative assistants to district superintendents for special education in a continuing dialogue with central division administrative and supervisory staff.

Like Dr. Shedd, I feel very strongly that the district superintendents and their staffs need the same zeal for the goals and should be as clear about the progressive trends in special education as special educators, if much change is to occur at the local level in a decentralized system. Also, we need to be willing to permit change to develop in the districts, even though the steps taken and the pace of change may not

be completely in accord with what we as special educators feel should be the case.

In Philadelphia, for example, in one district—District Seven—the superintendent has stated that special education has priority. Out of strong concern, the district superintendent is constantly seeking the support and technical understanding that the Division of Special Education offers. But the same situation does not exist in all of the eight districts. One district is moving toward concentrating a number of special classes in one building. This move is opposed to the Division's leadership in the thrust toward the increased integration of mildly handicapped pupils in all schools and classes.

With decentralization, the district superintendents exercise leadership for their staffs and communities in promoting change. As Division head and the Division leader in special education in Philadelphia, however, I feel that the greater the Division's impact upon special education personnel—supervisors, psychologists, teachers, and paraprofessionals, who are part of the special education force—the greater the movement to implement goals and recommended educational programs.

In Philadelphia, we do not have a systemwide procedure for mainstreaming the elementary schools. We have the expectation, now, of doing things differently at the secondary level, in two junior high schools, at least. We are looking for help from a federal grant through the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education for increased mainstreaming, and help from the University of Connecticut during a six-month planning period in which special educators, regular teachers, principals, and other staff will participate. We will try inservice training to help the school staffs find their own models to mainstream their schools. We hope the school faculties will develop some very creative plans; they do not have to be for resource rooms, individualization of instruction, tutoring, or small-group instruction. Each district should develop a unique model within board of education policy and Division guidelines to take its own way. We have stressed the importance of involving the total school family in these developments.

I cannot speak too strongly for the importance of parent participation. We have a strong advocate group for special education in the Association for Retarded Children.

In Philadelphia, in June 1971, following the P.A.R.C. suit, we were faced with the challenge of whether to move ahead arbitrarily with some change measures and place in schools children who were previously nonattendant, or to wait for the education process to achieve widespread understanding of the requirements of the Consent De-

cree. I would say that we did some of both because of the right to education directive for prompt action. If we had waited for all district superintendents, principals, and teachers to understand and accept mandated changes, the school district of Philadelphia would have been in contempt of court. We carried the responsibility in order to comply promptly. Classes were required to be organized. They were not to be placed in basements or churches or in isolated places. All the resources of the school system were required to be used in order to assure compliance with the court decree. Centralization was required to co-exist *with* the trend toward increased decentralization because of the emergency changes requiring prompt installation to comply with a court order.

As a result of this action—the bringing of a different, previously nonattendant population into the schools—we have seen some significant change in the attitudes of all staff, parents, and community. Not all are committed, however; we still have considerable resistance in the field. We have many people joining with special education in this important extension of the right to education and understanding the goals for the education of handicapped pupils much more clearly. It is possible to help children with very severe problems in public schools. There can be payoffs, also, for normal pupils who may be involved in helping the handicapped.

Keith E. Gainey
Cleveland, Ohio

Many of Dr. Shedd's remarks and major points, although targeted on decentralized programs, were also appropriate for centralized school systems, as the ultimate goals and objectives of both types of systems are basically identical. I am confident that all of us whatever the type of organizational program in which we are involved, want each child to have the best possible instructional program that we can provide. Whether in centralized or decentralized school systems, high on our list of priority considerations are (a) the right of all children to an appropriate education, (b) assessment and placement procedures observing the principles of due process, and (c) the provision of a wide range of instructional options for students in the various areas of exceptionality.

Parent participation, or parent partnership, which is an essential element of decentralized school systems, is a necessary component of any effective instructional program and must be achieved in central-

ized school districts in appropriate ways. Whatever the means that are used to secure parent input they must be used in the parents' territory, in their neighborhoods. It is imperative that we go to them. One technique used in the Cleveland system to gain parent participation is pyramid meetings. They are held periodically at night for area teachers and all parents who have children attending special education classes in the elementary and junior high schools that feed into the various senior high schools throughout the city. These meetings are devoted to in-depth discussions and planning of educational programs for the students. Right now, our supervisory staff is out four nights a week attending such meetings and they will follow this schedule for the next five weeks. It must be emphasized that effective, productive planning includes all the people involved in a specific program providing services to children.

In reflecting upon Dr. Shedd's remarks relative to the support and back-up services that personnel in the field should expect from central office staff, it must be stressed that in large measure the success of educational programs is based upon the interdependence of the individuals and agencies involved, the depth of cooperative planning, and the skill with which instructional procedures are implemented.

Throughout Dr. Shedd's paper, in which it was evident that he places great importance on the merits of cooperative efforts, I could not help thinking of a quotation attributed to the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which is repeated on various occasions by the president of our Board of Education: "I can't be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can't be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. But together, we'll make it."

Charles Meisgeier
*University of Houston**

Last year I had the opportunity to visit Philadelphia. Those of you who are or will be involved in implementing court orders on the right to education and other principles, should see the very realistic and rapid way in which the Philadelphia school system is responding to the crises engendered by Pennsylvania court directives. Dr. Young and her organization have mobilized very quickly to meet the needs.

* At the time of the Conference, Dr. Meisgeier was Coordinator of the Center for Human Resources Development and Educational Renewal in the Houston Independent School District.

I can remember being in Philadelphia several years ago on the day that a new superintendent took over his responsibilities. I wondered what he would say in his first meeting in a place like Philadelphia. I was born and raised there and was somewhat familiar with some of the problems and the politics. His comments centered around the idea that school district meetings should become proactive in the way they talk about the problems of education. He was right, for the constant management of crises is not a satisfactory way to proceed and is the reason for many of the problems that confront us. The new superintendent was Dr. Shedd.

In his paper, today, Dr. Shedd raises some very critical questions that need to be answered as school systems are involved in mainstreaming and decentralization problems. Again, Dr. Shedd advocated proactive program planning although he also pointed out how difficult it is to do that kind of planning in a school system. When I was a professor at the university, I was constantly amazed at the lack of planning in school districts. After I became a staff member of a large school district, I came to realize why more planning was not being done. You spend from 8:00-4:30 just maintaining the day-to-day operations and then, if you want to plan for any kind of massive change effort, you have to get your crew together at 4:30 and maybe keep them for four or five more hours several nights a week.

I want to make one other comment about Philadelphia. The other day, in a meeting with a group of parents, I was talking about the need for continuous progress learning, the need for individualized curriculum, because in Houston our philosophy is that all education should be special education. The kind of individualized program that we can provide for handicapped children needs to be made available to all children. That's a concept that I support very, very strongly. The education of handicapped children has been individualized in the mainstreaming program in Houston. But the gifted child also needs to have the opportunity to move at his unique rate. Every child needs that opportunity. Somehow or other, we are going to have to have special education for all children.

After listening to my views on this subject, the parents in the audience asked where I had attended school. They said that I had risen to being one of the superintendents of this large system and that I did not have individualized instruction in my day. Then they named all the famous people who did not have individualized instruction. I told them that I thought the education I had had in Philadelphia was the best traditional education available at that time. It was very cognitively oriented and achievement oriented, but it was not humanistic.

It was my experience in school that made me want to bring about changes in educational practice. As a child, I saw many things happen to people that lowered self-esteem, things such as tracking, the placement of children very early in their lives according to whether they were "D" or "C" students. They were programed in certain directions from the first grade on. Children were paddled, but the most destructive violence that we experienced was not physical. Routinely, teachers insulted, humiliated, and embarrassed children; worse still, they simply ignored many children. It was a violation of the sensitivity of the humanness of individuals. It occurred in the schools then and it is still occurring. I think it will continue to occur until somehow we can convey to regular education the concept that characterizes special education, that is, that every individual is unique and has worth.

When I listened to Dr. Shedd this morning and some of the discussions yesterday, I thought how many of us have been involved in the past in movements to provide better services for handicapped children. We have worked with the Association for Retarded Children or with community groups to organize programs for handicapped children and to have them accepted in public school situations, and it was a tough job. What really brought about the changes, however, was when parent organizations finally went the route of going to legislatures, getting laws enacted, dealing with the courts, and so forth. I have been wondering the last few days about the right to education, wondering when that movement is going to become a part of the mainstreaming action in terms of people demanding quality education for all children. I think that parents and special education again may be setting some directions for education. Maybe the changes that we are talking about that need to occur will not be realized until the people who are interested in education—parents, teachers, and others—somehow or other bring about legislative or judicial mandates to make those changes. As a matter of fact, I would suggest that, probably, we are going to see more and more court actions related to quality in education, not on just peripheral kinds of issues but on basic kinds of educational programing in regular education. It will be interesting to see what happens.

In his paper, Dr. Shedd has indicated that a unique blend of complications was involved in decentralization. I like the word unique. It is a good term. I think that it may be the core of a structure that we can build into the changes in the total system, that is, the recognition that not only is each child unique but each teacher is special and unique also. Teachers learn at different rates; they respond at different rates; and they have different commitments, interests, and motivations. These differences must be considered in inservice training, through

the unions and through other groups to which they belong as unique individuals. Certainly if the teacher is unique, then the local school is unique. The building includes a principal and a group of people who have made some type of commitment to the education of children, and the change effort must be adaptive, responsive, and sensitive enough to deal with the building personnel, parents, and students who are all involved. Since the system is unique, the change effort must be adaptive and responsive to its uniqueness. Certainly every school system is unique, we have heard that fact over and over here. The way that one system responds to the problems of dealing with particular political and economic situations may not be the way that another responds. Yet we are definitely all moving in the direction of providing a better education for all children and personal attention to individual children and their needs. That is what special education seems to be all about: responding to the needs of individual kids.

Dr. Shedd mentioned a whole array of what I would define as transitional problems. There must be a transitional phase from centralization to decentralization. When people have been trained to react to certain issues certain ways, they are not able to throw off easily that training and its effects just because we say that we are moving in another direction. I have found that in a change effort just as night follows day, you can expect resistance and a counter reaction. The board and administration must make commitments to the change because they are going to be questioned and bombarded just as you are going to be bombarded. A very tight cohesive group is needed to stand up for the sort of direction to which you are committed.

I meet with small groups of principals every week in my office. One of the principals said recently, "I was against this program which we have been working on. I did not think it could work and I thought it was too expensive; I didn't understand the philosophy and I didn't accept the rationale. My teachers resisted it and I quickly responded to their resistance. But I started to see the benefits of the program late last spring, and this year the difference is obvious. Teachers who have made a commitment to the process feel that their creative instincts and the desires for things they really want to do for children over a period of years have come alive again. They have some real hope for and see some real possibilities of bringing about some real meaning for development in the lives of children."

A couple of the people at that meeting almost dropped on the floor because this principal had really given our team "hell" last year. What I am saying is that you have to have an organization that can withstand "hell" in the initial responses, that can stay with the change and hang in there until you get to the point where people begin to commit

t; emselves to your proc ss and your goals. Once they are with you, I do not see how anyone is going to change them back effectively. When persons are opened up to new potentials and capabilities within their own schools, I do not see how anyone can force them back to a restricted, closed system again.

What it all boils down to, I guess, is getting the building and organization to make the commitment to having an open system, and being able to withstand the flak associated with moving to that kind of system. I think the benefits for us, as educators, and for the children, are potentially tremendous. I think that all of us are beginning to see it happen.

Summary of Discussion

Question: What are some of the political implications of decentralization?

Answer: A local problem should be dealt with on a local basis, a major political problem, by the superintendent and board of education. At the local level, you have to get together with community representatives, such as PTA's, parents of special education children, and so forth, to send delegations to the various political reference groups. In political confrontations, if the opposition gets there first, you have almost lost the ball game.

Question: (On school systems which describe themselves as decentralized but, in fact, are not.)

Answer: Integrity, that is, matching what we say with what we do, is very much in the forefront of the consciousness of the people in the country today. If central office administrators are talking a lot about decentralization but not about the delegation of power and authority, along with responsibility and accountability, no one is fooled. People in the field will ask, for example, who will really make the decision on who is going to be the principal of the school after decentralization? Who will really make the decisions on which teachers are going to teach where? Who really will maintain the blotter account on the distribution and allocation of resources? And who will have to deal with the problems relating to these functions? To say that a city is not decentralizing, when it is not, is a much more honest way to deal with the issue than to claim that it is decentralizing.

Question: In the move to decentralization, is there a place to indicate that some issues are not negotiable? As more and more people develop the expertise and resources they need to make decisions, they seem to be willing to say, "You can make certain decisions at the central level but these other decisions belong to us."

Response: Once a special educator with a systemwide responsibility has decided that, for example, decentralization is the way to go, he should negotiate first with the superintendent and the board on the minimum conditions for the decentralized operation. If they are not willing to meet the conditions, the special education administrator should say that decentralization is not possible and he should continue to operate a highly centralized operation.

Take development funds, for example. In a system the size of Philadelphia, during the transition to the decentralization of special education, a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year would be needed. After negotiation, one would expect to come out with only

half, that is, about a hundred thousand dollars a year. Part of the negotiation with the superintendent of the board would be on the amount to be included in the budget each year for staff development. Then the question becomes, who is going to control the money?

Now, if in a system like Philadelphia, you earmark say $15 to $20 thousand each year for staff development priorities, the rest of the money—the other $80 or $85 thousand, should be distributed among the eight districts and they should control the purse strings. This kind of negotiation must take place. In determining how that hundred thousand is to be controlled and accounted for realistically, the special education superintendent ought to be sitting down with the eight district superintendents. Each brings his/her concerns and they work out how much money is to be retained in the central office and how much is to be spent out in the field. The same thing ought to occur with regard to staffing for the special education populations in the eight districts. There ought to be some hard negotiating between central office and field over how those personnel resources are allocated. Without such dialogues and negotiations—between the special education administrator and the board and superintendent and between the districts and the special education director—decentralization exists in name only.

With discretion and authority go accountability; without some responsibility, authority becomes license or irresponsibility. If funds obligated for certain purposes under policy or law are not spent for them, the local district must be held accountable. They cannot be allowed to get away with spending special education money for non-special education purposes, for example.

Observation: Doesn't this issue involve the values and priorities of the local area or district as opposed to the pre-decentralization values and priorities of the central office? In this case, for example, we could be talking about, say, security guards vs counselors. For discussion purposes here, let us say that the district considered security guards more important than counselors and spent that money for security guards in the school. Who is going to challenge the value and priority that is placed on the use of those funds? How are you going to negotiate whether the expenditure for security guards is not as appropriate as its earlier use for guidance counselors?

Response: Also, you have the question of how the guidance counselors functioned. The district may have developed a perfectly legitimate and more effective delivery system of guidance services with security guards rather than counselors. It may well be that the local board has decided that since, despite the number of attendance offi-

cers, absenteeism is still skyrocketing, why don't they for five years invest the money in better programs, instead. One is hard put to argue until the outcome of the project—the absentee rates at the end of the five years—can be evaluated. The rates may not be any higher; in fact, they may even be better if the funds were invested in a program that attracted kids rather than putting them into more cops on the street who tried to rake children into a program that is completely irrelevant to their lives.

Observation: The California legislature has made it possible for school districts to levy what we call tax over-rides if they want to provide additional services in special education. Although the school district raises the money, it goes into the general fund. We are in the second year of the legislation and we are losing the money in special education. We do not want to wait five years to find out if it is all going to shake out, because we feel that we are going to lose even more if we let this thing go on. The issue is critical. Other special educators in the large cities are fighting it because decentralization in the large cities came about for many different kinds of reasons other than that the program was good. There were racial problems; the school districts were coming apart because of too large numbers; and the kids weren't being taken care of. Lots of such things caused large cities to change and, as somebody said, special education will have to change too. Change is what special educators are resisting. Their problem today is decentralization. It is not because they don't want to or can't change but for more basic reasons.

Question: What can one do when a program advanced by a person with a high degree of competence is being blocked by the political power clique?

Answer: The district superintendent of the decentralized unit is not able to manage a special education program without special education expertise on his staff. I am assuming that the central office has an instructional supervision capability. A capability for providing psychological services is necessary for doing the screening, case studies, and all that. Instructional supervisors in a central office who service the field should report to the field, that is the necessary technical expertise in the field of special education. I would argue that the central superintendent has a monitoring responsibility for their field activities. He has the responsibility of making sure that those instructional field supervisors are kept up to date through a continuous program of inservice training. But day-to-day people in the operating field are responsible to the district superintendent first and second to the central office. The central superintendent's main responsibility is to

hold the districts accountable for providing special education services to the children who need them. If those services are not provided then he, with the sufficient clout of his manual, must let the districts know that that can't go on any longer. If special education funds are being allocated to the districts and not employed for that purpose, then the programs are ineffective. The same relation exists between a state department of education and local school districts. In cities, many of which are as large as a lot of states, the central office should act and behave more like a state agency than a local military establishment.

Conference Summary and Reflections

Ernest Willenberg
Los Angeles, California

I especially want to express my appreciation to Maynard Reynolds for his long-standing support of the Staff Committee and for helping it to organize in a way that gives it some visibility within the Council and some direction for the future. At our business session, we seemed to have a sense of purpose greater than ever before. Our need to hang together is uppermost whatever the circumstances may be for continued financial underwriting or support from some external source such as LTI. We are determined now to move in a direction that will be positive and fruitful for the exceptional children we serve.

Turning now to this conference, I would like to take some personal prerogatives by reporting my observations on and reactions to what seems to have transpired here. Ours was an important meeting on a very timely topic of great concern to all of us in one way or another. We came to this meeting from the backgrounds of different school systems and with various frames of reference regarding the concept of decentralization. We experienced some difficulty in communicating with each other; although we used the same words, they did not always have the same meanings. Perhaps a longer period to develop our vocabulary would have helped to clarify our meanings and understandings and speeded our grasp of the essential significance of decentralization as it applies to special education.

One of the most important outcomes of this meeting was the emergence of a central concern for mainstreaming in the context of decentralized organization and administration of school operations. We had some difficulty and used quite a bit of verbiage in the attempt to reconcile the philosophical concept of mainstreaming with contemporary modes of decentralization. Mainstreaming, suggested as a third form, focuses on the decentralization of pupil programing (or placement) as opposed to administrative or political decentralization which focuses on control and management of school systems.

Decentralization is concerned with the redistribution of power and accountability. Mainstreaming is concerned with the delivery of educational services to the pupil with special needs in the most appropriate environment for learning and development. Decentralization of a system can be accomplished by changing its internal organization for

the management and control of the processes for decisions and accountability. Or decentralization can become a political achievement whereby the consumer (the patrons) gain more direct control over the policies and management of the system. In either case, decentralization requires giving up power at the central level and redistributing it to either lower organizational levels or political jurisdictions. Decentralization of administration can take place without political decentralization, but political decentralization cannot take place without some form of administrative decentralization. Whatever form of decentralization may be used, mainstreaming can be accomplished in either. The centralization or decentralization of a school system will not necessarily facilitate or impede mainstreaming.

Decentralization of school systems is a phenomenon of large city school districts. Concentration of power and bigness have become associated with moribundity, inertia, detachment, and lack of responsiveness. Some people blame centralization for low pupil achievement, student unrest, poor behavior, failure of bond and tax elections, and similar problems. Therefore, boards of education have been impelled to make changes in order to keep school systems from being ripped up by their constituencies. The form most frequently chosen is the administrative type of decentralization. It follows that changes resulting from external pressures generally are viewed with less enthusiasm by the establishment than the constituency. Parenthetically, special education has remained substantially intact because, in no small part, external demands for the reallocation and redistribution of power did not specifically call for comparable changes in the delivery system for services to exceptional pupils. Lest someone take issue at this point, let me hasten to add that I am making a distinction between the delivery system and the programing of children within the system. The external as well as internal cry for mainstreaming in no way disavows the array of program options that constitute a comprehensive plan to meet the special instructional needs of all pupils. Whatever the impact on special education of changes in district organizational structure, the chances are that major changes in the administration of special education came about in response to a concern for organizational consistency in a design that it was hoped would fit the needs of all pupils. As a result, special education leaders tend to view decentralization with some apprehension for fear that the mode for the reallocation and redistribution of power will be applied as a procrustean formula to the education of all exceptional pupils. These leaders fear that children with special needs will lose their program advocates and interveners in the diffusion of special interests and needs of the general pupil population. Mainstreaming is not really an

integral part of this concern unless the individual has failed to differentiate between pupil programing vs administrative authority. Improvement in the quality of instruction remains the ultimate objective of decentralization.

The wave of contemporary decentralization efforts may be viewed as a series of far-reaching changes aimed at revitalizing and strengthening education by giving every school an opportunity to design its own educational program in response to locally determined needs. Reference was made frequently to the fact that decentralization is the nucleus of plans for educational renewal and, hence, it follows that special educators should ask what are the implications of such plans for the education of exceptional individuals. Although the present forms of decentralization received little if any impetus from internal or external forces concerned with the education of exceptional pupils, we do have a sense of being in what you might call a "flight pattern," with the necessity of heading our plane on the same strip as that outlined for the decentralization effort. When a whole school system is reshaping its structure for the delivery of services, it is imperative that special education be an integral part of the total system in one way or another. This is the point that Meisgeier made yesterday in his emphasis on a systemwide approach to change. Since it is becoming evident that administrative organization is the modus operandi for educational renewal, may we not ask ourselves whether the system provides the means by which the schools can be made responsive to the instructional needs of exceptional pupils as well as to the rest of the school population? If we have added to our own confusion by equating the process of decentralization for general education with the process of mainstreaming the exceptional individual, let us then become reconciled to the fact that mainstreaming can and does take place either in or out of a centralized administrative structure. If decentralization makes schools more responsive to the instructional needs of all youngsters, then, obviously, such schools can and should be more responsive to the individuals with special needs. Mainstreaming is essential to such an objective.

The giant task is to generate responsive schools. Is the special education effort applied in a way that will challenge the responsiveness of schools to the special needs of pupils? Is the pupil programed in a way that provides him with instruction in the most appropriate environment for learning? And, finally, what happens if some pupils are not served well, or are not served at all? The question raises the subject of accountability.

It has been noted at this meeting that most special education programs tend to operate in some centralized mode. Yet it can be pointed

out paradoxically that we are representing such programs at a time when special education has been well advanced in its initial phase of decentralization. I have reference to the movement away from the centralization of services for the handicapped in state institutions to local communities. The extent of such decentralization to local communities and educational systems received scarcely any attention in our discussion at this conference. Yet we can truly say that special education has already undergone a major organizational change that will help us to realize the truth of some of Ray Graham's most quotable quotes[1] from a quarter of a century ago:

> Exceptional children are more like than different from their non-exceptional peers. . . .
>
> Special education is *a part of* and not *apart* from the regular program of the school. . . .
>
> Segregation of exceptional children should be reduced to a minimum. . . .
>
> Special education does not relieve the regular school or teacher of responsibility for the exceptional child. It offers special services to supplement the regular school program. . . .

If further decentralization is to occur, a number of well-placed concerns merit attention.

1. Should the needs of exceptional children continue to have special program advocacy in a decentralized school system?
2. Should the special program needs of exceptional pupils continue to enjoy earmarked or statutory fiscal safeguards?
3. Should regular teachers have responsibility for the instruction of exceptional pupils who are suited for mainstreaming in the same sense that they have the responsibility for meeting the needs of other pupils assigned to their classes?
4. Should regular school administrators have concern and responsibility for integrating exceptional pupils into the mainstream for the same reasons ascribed to integration efforts on behalf of certain racial and ethnic groups? Specifically, would not the purposes of racial and ethnic balance also apply as a social concept to the inclusion of exceptional individuals in the general composition and balance of minorities in the composition of school enrollment?
5. Should the degree of administrative decentralization for special education include the criterion of prevalence or incidence rate

[1]University of Oklahoma *Summer Session Conference Proceedings*, University of Oklahoma, November 1947.

of a given exceptionality in the general pupil population? It has been suggested that high-prevalence groups be considered for decentralized administration whereas low-prevalence groups might continue in a centralized mode for service.

6. Do you regard decentralization as a district mode for the delivery of service more hospitable to meeting the special needs of exceptional pupils than centralization?
7. Are there aspects of decentralization in a school system which, when applied to the administration of special education, should be approached with caution lest the quality of instruction for exceptional children be diminished?

The foregoing questions were raised to stimulate thought and to encourage a critical analysis of where we are and where we are going in special education, philosophically and operationally, as our school systems adapt to rapid changes in their administrative organization. There was consensus that this Conference did much to bring about a clearer understanding of the significance of decentralization as related to contemporary issues in special education. But there was also agreement that further opportunity to get together would help to resolve and bring closure on critical issues that still demand attention.

Decentralization and Special Education in the Great City Schools: A Summary of Survey Results

Nicholas Nash
University of Minnesota

Many urban school systems in the last decade have reorganized their administrative functions to delegate certain previously centralized responsibilities to area or subdistrict offices, and these smaller organizational structures have become an essential part of the administration of urban education. This process is generically labeled "decentralization." Elsewhere in this publication, Gittell argues that decentralization can be either administrative or political in nature and that it is both useful and important to distinguish between the two. Administrative decentralization involves a symbolic distribution of regulatory power to regional offices with the decision-making power still in the central office. Political decentralization, by far the rarer event, according to Gittell, involves the reduction of centralized decision-making power; personnel control, dollar control, and policy making are shared between the regional office and the community it serves.

Given all this decentralization activity and the potential impact of judicial and legislative processes, special educators have expressed concern about their place in the process—their role in maintaining and advancing the interests of youngsters with special needs in decentralized urban systems. As a direct result of their concern, Dr. Maynard C. Reynolds designed a survey which was carried out during the autumn of 1973 under the auspices of the Leadership Training Institute/Special Education located on the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota.[1] The results of that survey are summarized here.

[1] The format of the questionnaire emerged out of extensive conversations between Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Marechal-Neil Young (Philadelphia), Dr. Theodore White (Denver), and Mr. Robert Hughley (formerly of Portland).

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) sought information in the following areas:

1. General demography.
2. Organizational structure before decentralization.
3. The history of decentralization activity.
4. The decentralization plan and its relation to special education.
5. The retention, decentralization, or sharing of functions, such as needs assessment, program direction, evaluation, research, and record keeping.
6. The impact of decentralization on area administrator attitudes, specific programs, and organizational interrelationships.
7. Resolved and anticipated problems in relation to decentralization.
8. Evaluation of the advantages or disadvantages of decentralization with particular attention to community control issues and concerns for innovation.
9. Recommendations for both general administrators and directors of special education in school systems which are about to decentralize.

Since special educators are not experts in organizational sociology, the questions were intended (a) to explore areas of decentralization in which special educators had expressed interest of a practical nature, and (b) to encourage a systematic consideration of decentralization issues prior to the related conference.

The instrument, as one might have surmised, suffered from the usual deficiencies of open-ended questions: Respondents ignored or omitted items, misinterpreted questions, or emphasized particular parts of a question and neglected others. An additional difficulty that emerged was that the instrument was apparently burdensome for those respondents whose systems had decentralized. It required hard information outside the normal operating range of the directors of special education; some of them had assumed their positions relatively recently in systems in which decentralization was a well-established arrangement. Thus in many instances, the information they could supply was not even anecdotal. Apparently, organizations rarely log the workings of an internal reorganization; one might suppose that, frequently, the recollections of a process occurring before one's arrival on a scene tend to be heavily influenced by the peculiar organizational mythology which is familiar to employees of large and complex structures. The results of the survey, therefore, must be regarded as an imperfect reflection of complicated processes.

The results are based on returns from 20 of the 24 directors of special education[2] in the cities[3] surveyed. Specific descriptions of the school-systems—size, ethnic distributions, and organizational structure—are given in Appendix A. The 12 decentralized cities are discussed first, followed by a discussion of the seven which have not decentralized.

One weakness in any report of data collected from predominantly open-ended questionnaires is that in the search for central tendencies in patterning, those qualities that make a respondent unique are necessarily minimized and many less important qualities are maximized. To give this report some of the flavor of the responses, direct quotations have been included.[4]

The History of Decentralization

The internal and external forces that appeared to lead to decentralization could not be outlined easily or clearly by the respondents. It is often quite difficult to draw a commonly agreed upon boundary between a school system and its environment. The impact of school extends well past a family's threshold: Children are students, and parents are voters and taxpayers; these multiple allegiances breed ambiguity.

School board members bear the burden of both internal and external expectations. They represent the interests of the community, in the community's perception of them, but, over time, they come to represent the interests and expectations of the school system as well. In fact, Kerr (1964) considered school boards to be primarily internal organizations in that they participate in setting legitimate school policies, rather than external organizations, in that they represent community interests minimally. His view may imply a more

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[2] Out of the 24 cities included in the survey, responses were received from 20 (83%). The questionnaires discussed here cover Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Oakland, Philadelphia, Portland, San Diego, and San Francisco. All direct quotations in the text are from the directors of special education unless otherwise cited. The questionnaires received from three cities were not complete and, therefore, were not included in the analysis by Gittell.

[3] Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.

[4] There is always a danger in abstracting comments from their context; the risk, however, was thought to be worthwhile.

rigid condition than actually exists, however. One is tempted to surmise the existence of a continuous oscillation by the boards between system interests and public concerns which is frequently blurred by the continual crossing of boundaries. The blurring may increase the survival chances of board members at election time.

If, as happened in some of the respondent cities, the board of education appointed a blue-ribbon panel of citizens or outside experts to study the school system and they recommended decentralization, then one cannot assign the responsibility to forces in or out of the school system. It seems likely that these panels are formed to legitimize actions desired by the board (and school system) rather than to make recommendations which will move the boards and administrations in new directions. In some cases, the panel is predominantly local in membership; in others, regionally or nationally known figures are prominent members. One might hypothesize that panels weighted with non-local members are those formed at the urging of school system leaders, while locally oriented panels may reflect reasonable community concern and less support for the system's internal administration.

Whatever the panel's recommendation, the decision to adopt or reject rests totally with the school board, and whatever happens is the complex product of internal and external pressures which are impossible to isolate and unrelated to this study. The point is to suggest that the articulation of forces and their assignment to internal or external categories is very difficult.

Furthermore, the forces for decentralization within a school system may be organized responses to somewhat ambiguous stimuli that impinge on the school system. Or, conversely, the internal forces may themselves be stimuli to which the board (or appointed panel) must respond. Although it is perplexing to conclude precisely from whence emanated the source of the pressure to decentralize, nonetheless, the perceptions of the respondents relative to the sources seemed to fall into five basic categories.

1. The source most often cited was outside pressure brought by groups who felt that "their needs could be heard best if decisions were made in communities rather than in a central location" (Chicago). In some cases, most of this kind of impetus came from various Black and other minority groups,[5] although it would not be unfair to infer, perhaps, that they were tacitly supported by other kinds of constituent groups who concluded that decentralization would work

[5] In New York City, for example, Black parents were militant advocates of local school control.

to their advantage also. Among the latter would be anti-integration, general parent, regional parent, and taxpayer groups who "advised" the school board on decentralization.

2. Decentralization pressure sometimes emerged with a change in school superintendent. This situation appeared to have occurred in Minneapolis, Oakland, Portland, and Baltimore. The arrival of a new superintendent only correlated with decentralization activity, however; the data are unclear on whether the superintendent was part of the initiating structure or responding to a general ambience. In most cases, undoubtedly, a combination of elements conspired to produce the final outcome which is simply described as decentralization.

3. In two cities, Detroit and Los Angeles, legislators played an important role in the onrush of decentralization. The Michigan legislature in 1969 passed the last of three decentralization bills submitted in 1968 and 1969. Public Act 244, which became law in August 1969, was a mandate to Detroit to decentralize its schools.

In Los Angeles, the threat of one legislator to create more and smaller school districts (from one to anywhere from 12 to 24 districts) combined with community pressure to bring about decentralization.

4. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville situation in New York seems to have influenced events in both Philadelphia and Detroit, perhaps by giving community groups a clearer focus on how they might influence the development of schools in their cities.

5. Teachers in some urban systems "felt the system was not responsive to their needs, and that they were scapegoats for conditions over which they had no control" (Los Angeles). This last observation was atypical of the directors' responses; most did not see internal personnel as significant in creating decentralization pressure.[6]

As one sifts through the responses, it becomes clear that another category of an implicit rather than explicit nature should be added: that of the atmosphere of the 1960's. Perhaps at no time in memory was protest in all its shadings more prevalent or visible in the United States as during that decade. It may well be that if schools reflect the culture of a place and time, this recent period of turmoil mirrored other social concerns as well as education. Apparently, both insiders and outsiders became increasingly concerned during the 1960's with

[6] In no case was union philosophy or action discussed. However, it is unlikely that teachers' or administrators' organizations were unconcerned about decentralization. According to the contemporary press, the teachers' union in New York City openly fought decentralized control of hiring and firing practices.

the growing size of school systems,[7] and they sought ways to make the systems more understandable to their internal personnel and clients. There was a feeling that the urban school system was doomed unless a notable attempt was made to increase not only its response to pressures for change but also its continuing capacity to respond.

Although the definition of what constitutes the beginning and the end of activities leading to decentralization is arbitrary, it appears that the range of years required for planning and implementing decentralization runs from less than one, as in Boston and Memphis, to the more than five years required in Chicago. The average number of years for a system to decentralize is just over two, although one must remember that response variations are the result of not only the undefined "beginning" of decentralization but the ambiguity of when decentralization has been established.

Systems that decentralize most activities but not special education may not be decentralized yet. One wonders if selective decentralization is not a sign of, in Gittell's phrase, administrative rather than political decentralization. At the same time, a system that does not intend to decentralize special education may be said to be decentralized at some other point. Perhaps time is not nearly so important a variable as the process a system uses to cajole, co-opt, or persuade its members and clients that decentralization is a desirable goal.

The "decentralization scenario" is, as one might guess, reasonably predictable and falls into two basic patterns, closed and semi-open, and the closed is by far the more common. Implicit in the closed pattern is the notion that the board and the superintendent have resolved to decentralize the system; recognition of the policy means that the mechanisms of implementation are set in motion. Perhaps a more apt description would be "decentralization by edict."[8]

The less common pattern of the decentralization scenario, the semi-open, involved a greater degree of participation by people within and without the system, with the final decisions determined by a more democratic style. Nonetheless, no city that studied decentralization rejected it; all accepted it to some degree. Within each pattern, after an acceptable proposal was promulgated and adopted, the system retrained personnel, made new appointments, altered aspects of its

[7] Size may not mean number of students, as most urban systems are currently experiencing a decline in enrollment; the word may be used to denote complexity or abstruseness of purpose.

[8] In Detroit, the edict came from the legislative branch of state government; apparently the system played only a minor role in that situation.

structure, and decentralization occurred. Or, at least, it was said to have occurred.

The Content of Decentralization

Respondents showed general agreement on the goals of the various groups involved in the decentralization process, with one proviso: No one respondent articulated the possibility that different groups may have had different goals; instead, the goals cited tended to fall under the rubric of system goals.[9] Improved decision making, increased flexibility, better educational services for children, a higher degree of responsiveness—all of these were typically the cited goals. Nonetheless, the goals of the constituent groups in the decentralization process remain unclear and it seems likely that the goals listed constitute a filtered summation of the desires of the various relevant groups. Possibly, however, decentralization goals became a shield that, in a direct way, protected school systems from other criticisms. It may be safe to conclude that many of the groups involved in the planning or goal-setting phases were less involved in more general demands for system change.

Concomitantly, few respondents reported conflict in the decentralization process. While some confined their comments to the special education department, thereby eliminating the need to discuss (and perhaps discern) the existence of conflict elsewhere, others—half of the reporting cities, in fact—reported varying degrees of difficulty which were located within the school system itself. As one might guess, most of the problems pertain to role conflicts and authority conflicts. Apparently, some personnel do not (or refuse to) comprehend new expectations of performance. As one respondent[10] suggested, the attitude may be due to the attenuation of authority and the resultant discomfort in accepting positions with less power and, perhaps, reduced status.

Respondents' comments notwithstanding, it would seem inevitable (possibly even desirable) that a certain level of conflict accompany decentralization. Any structural change in a system would appear to cause distress to some of that system's members. However, conflict may occur or be permitted to occur only in areas perceived by constituents to be legitimate; in other words, conflict is sublimated to parts of the system where it can be dealt with. Another possibility is that real conflict has not yet become visible because the new lines

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[9] Perhaps they could be described as rhetorical goals. See Table 1 for an interesting comparison between goals and performance.

[10] Baltimore.

of operation are still somewhat muddled and both vertical and horizontal relationships continue to be subjected to testing and accommodation. Lastly, conflict may not be perceived by those who are less directly involved in decentralization planning and implementation, as seems to be the situation of directors of special education.

In four cities, directors felt that special educators were included consistently in decentralization planning; in six other systems, special educators were included by courtesy (symbolic participation) and had little access to planning roles, or they were not included because special education was not being decentralized. The determining factors for not involving special education in the explicit decentralization activity are not clear: size, quality of program, lack of potential for economy of scale, and the level of expertise required in special education appear to be influential, but the degree to which each is important individually and in interaction is impossible to determine.

The style of each city's decentralization was unique. There are common elements in the structure ultimately developed by all of the cities, however. The most apparent common elements are the definition of a number of regions within the city and the assignment or reassignment of personnel to those regional structures. The regions were generally defined, apparently on the basis of "socio-economic factors, ethnic compositions, and existing district structures" (Chicago). In Boston, the area superintendent has a staff of one secretary; more commonly, each area has a staff of directors and supervisors who report to the area superintendent who then reports to an associate or deputy superintendent in central administration. These parallel mini-systems are concerned primarily with instruction in most cities, although some budgetary control is beginning to be spun off from the central system into the areas. This last aspect is, according to the directors, the exception rather than the rule. Most other noninstructional aspects of system administration remain centrally controlled—food services, payroll, personnel—but there are many unpatterned exceptions.

In areas other than special education, such as physical education, vocational education, counseling, curriculum, and instruction, no pattern of centralization or decentralization was typical. In most cases, the special education organization was altered very little after the onset of decentralization. In five cities, no change occurred at all. In the remaining systems, there were some special education administrative shifts into the area structures or, as in Chicago, an organizational expansion for local and district day-to-day administration with the planning function still centralized.

Overall, few substantive changes are apparent in the position and function of the citywide or central director of special education. What alterations have been made seem to be in kind of interaction with area personnel and higher-level central officials. The role has taken on an increased concern with planning and coordination. The change may have been one of degree or emphasis and it also may reflect the need to accommodate, which is generally prevalent in the beginning stages of an altered organizational pattern.

In conjunction with this overview of their roles, directors were asked to evaluate typical functions of special education in an urban school system, that is, whether they were retained by the central office, decentralized, or shared. The results are summarized in Table 1. It gives the clearest indication that although systems may be called decentralized, the functions of special education are generally *not* decentralized. A number of cities share functions between central and subordinate offices, and it is impossible to discern whether this division reflects a transitional phase or suggests that many of these functions will continue to be shared.

What does seem clear from Table 1 is that financial and resource development is much more likely to be retained centrally in larger systems than in smaller ones, while functions more closely related to service delivery tend to be, at the least, shared.

A later item in the instrument sought to determine who controls the personnel selection process. Again, this function continues to be centralized, although in three of the cities the selection responsibility is explicitly shared between the personnel and special education offices. In another aspect of control, area personnel (principals, directors, etc.) often have a role in making tenure decisions. Nonetheless, it appears that the more central authorities have the lion's share of the capacity to act on tenure.

Pupil personnel services have been altered very little under decentralization. In five cities, these services remain centralized; in four others, decentralization or a move toward it has taken place, generally in terms of developing a geographically oriented "team."

Programs for the educable mentally retarded seem to have been influenced more by other concerns than by decentralization activity. Most systems reported no changes as the result of decentralization, and where changes occurred, they were reported as being due to general mainstreaming activities, an increase in resource rooms, or reclassification procedures (such as Chapter 766 in Massachusetts has required in 1974). Clearly, decentralization *qua* decentralization

Table 1
Assignment of Administrative Functions in
Respondent City School Systems

	Systems Representing Total Population Under One Million[1]			Systems Representing Total Population Over One Million[1]		
	Retained[2]	Decent.[3]	Shared[4]	Retained[2]	Decent.[3]	Shared[4]
Needs Assessment	4	1	4	1	0	4
Program Planning & Organizing	3	1	5	1	0	4
Financial /Resource Department	4	1	4	5	0	0
Program Director/Supervisor	4	0	3	2	1	2
Consultation	4	0	2	3	0	1
Program Evaluation	3	0	2	0	0	5
Research	5	0	1	3	0	0
Parent/Community Relationships	2	0	5	1	2	2
Record Keeping	4	0	3	0	1	4
Inservice Education	3	0	3	1	0	4
Pupil Identification	3	1	3	1	2	2
Child Study/Case Management	3	1	4	1	2	2
Staff Development	5	0	2	1	0	4
Budgeting	4	0	2	2	1	2

[1] Some cities are counted twice in categories because of programmatic differences. Other directors responded only to parts of the question and the cities, therefore, were not tallied on every item.

[2] Functions retained by central office.

[3] Functions assigned to area or region.

[4] Functions shared by central office and area or region.

has had little effect in this area, and it may be that there was no reason to expect it to have had an impact.

In general, the attitudes of area personnel, both superintendents and principals, are seen as favorable to special education under decentralized arrangements. In a number of cases, this acceptance had occurred before decentralization. In Los Angeles, for example, exceptional students had long been integrated into regular programs so decentralization had little substantive impact. In the other cities—Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, Memphis, and Boston—the increased interaction between administrators and special educators seems to have encouraged positive attitudes, although one city cited the need for additional role clarification vis-a-vis central and area personnel. In fact, as special educators continue to develop and implement various

kinds of mainstreaming models, such role ambiguities will probably increase.

Two items in the questionnaire focused on innovation: programmatic differentiation in the decentralized area, and evaluation of the existence and locus of forces for innovation in a school system. About half of the systems reported that some changes had occurred but it was not clear if *programmatic* differences existed among regions or areas. There was the implication, and only that, of some potential freedom to innovate at the local level, a potential that is still decidedly unfulfilled.

Since special education is by and large *not* decentralized, (a) innovation, when it occurs, emanates from the core of the system; (b) the newness of decentralized activity has generated coping behavior which precludes innovating; (c) tradition is difficult to break; and (d) there was a certain amount of hedging in response to the question, and understandably so.

In the rhetorical goals of decentralization, the emphasis is on "responsiveness to community needs." Logically, such a focus implies that in different locales, unique programs will (and ought to) be developed. According to the directors, they are not. The questionnaire did not attend to the reasons for this paucity of innovation, but one can surmise that urban systems are extremely discomfited by the political ramifications evolving from differential treatment of students through programs. When one is accustomed to systemwide similarity, it is difficult to accept the responsibility of promulgating differences. When systems are expected to innovate they often become inhibited instead.

Few changes have occurred in the administration of programs for low-incidence handicaps. They continue to be centrally controlled and operated, although central, area, and local personnel collaborate a great deal. In Chicago and Philadelphia, for example, the principals are delegated the responsibility for such programs but they receive substantial assistance from other parts of the system. As is true with other special programs, the tendency is to maintain the centralization of the special education function.

Another item on the questionnaire concerned the potential impact on decentralization processes of the "right to education" suits. No system felt that the suits had affected decentralization, but all are, not unexpectedly, extraordinarily attentive to such judicial pronouncements and to their implications for special education. Because special education tends to be centralized, one would not anticipate any substantive influence from the courts where local decentralization within the system might be concerned.

The Evaluation of Decentralization Activity

The final section of the questionnaire related to the problems, broadly construed, which the directors perceived as having been generated by decentralization. Some respondents found it understandably difficult to comment on the decentralization problems correctly foreseen because they had not assumed their present positions until well after the process had taken place. For the rest, the problems fell into the categories of "role problems," which relate to "communication problems," and these in turn are connected to "visibility problems" for special education.

Role problems imply the impact of restructuring within the system hierarchy and the almost inevitable conflict of allegiances, expectations, and preferences. Communication difficulties ran the gamut from internal problems to finding effective techniques to deal with parents and other constituents. Visibility implied the maintainance of a forum for the expression of special education needs. Also correctly forecast were increased costs and conflicts over implementing priorities.

Intuitively, one might postulate that because special education was not a central aspect of the decentralization process, the directors tended to emphasize territorial maintenance, rather than foreseeing decentralization "costs" which might affect them somewhere "down the road." After all, they had no real interest in anticipating costs which did not apply to their area of responsibility. In terms of problems actually encountered, respondents either reflected ideas about the system as a totality or confined their responses to the limited perspective of a centralized special education subsystem.

One respondent cited as general system problems the unhappiness of teachers with decentralization and the lack of parental involvement; the latter was one of the avowed purposes of decentralization initially. The lack of money was also cited, as were the problem of dual allegiances and the perennial concern of maintaining and improving communication. A more commonly cited issue was related to assuring the presence of qualified personnel and maintaining well-coordinated programs of good quality. This issue may reflect the doubt over the effect of decentralization in centralized special education programs.

According to the directors, the future is fraught with difficulty. Should decentralization continue to evolve as a response to certain aspects of administering large urban school systems, there is a distinct possibility that regions within school systems could become miniature feudal baronies. Much depends on where and to what ex-

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tent budgetary control is located, the impact of continuing enrollment declines, the capacity of area personnel to transcend coping behaviors and find effective management techniques, the skill and attitudes of a central office staff in coming to grips with the issues pertaining to a reduction in role, and, ultimately, what happens to and for youngsters.[11]

The special education directors appear to be vaguely optimistic with respect to the future but it remains to be seen whether their optimism is born of hope or experience. The typical sentiment expressed seems to be that once the regional people get their crises, roles, and conflicts sorted out, special education will become the object of increased attention. It is not clear whether sufficient organizational maturation will occur before other kinds of forces mandate additional attention to special education.

This optimistic feeling was apparent in the section devoted to an analysis of gains and losses to urban special education programs resulting from decentralization. The gains outnumbered the losses, with increased citizen participation, programs existing closer to children's homes, and a greater commitment by area personnel mentioned by every director. Other gains cited involved links with localized support services and the availability of a higher-level school system executive with local knowledge and responsibility. The losses center around the increased complexity endemic in a decentralized system and the accompanying decrease in potential control.

Optimism is founded more on potential than on actual developments: An abstract quality to some of the responses suggests that if all goes according to plan, decentralization ought to do what it was designed to do. Overall, the plusses for decentralization concern making very large school systems smaller and more comprehensible to members and clients even at the risk of more administrative complexity. Los Angeles was the only city to volunteer the results of a survey evaluating its system decentralization. It is likely that other evaluations have occurred but perhaps none is as sophisticated as the one in Los Angeles.

In almost all cases, the directors described special education programs as having come "closer to the people" by virtue of the decentralization activity. This observation is both a continuation of the close relationships that are common between parents and special education programs and a by-product of the increased community

[11]One wonders, somewhat cynically, whether centralization will be advocated in the future as a newer and more effective means of providing educational services.

participation in decentralization itself. It does seem plausible that, as the Los Angeles director suggested, decentralization is not causative in bringing policy formation closer to the susceptibility of "the people." Client-related activities may take advantage of regional structures, the over-arching rhetoric of decentralization, and the historical relationship of parents to special education. It is not apparent that such closure has any impact on policy independent of whatever needs might already be perceived at various points within the system.

Decentralization Priorities

In articulating the priorities for general leaders in systems about to decentralize, the directors consistently mentioned the following:

1. Plan extensively with goals and dates for achieving them clearly set out.
2. Emphasize and value internal and external communication.
3. Determine both manpower and dollar needs for planning and implementation.
4. Establish and communicate exhaustively the process by which the task is to be accomplished.
5. Orient, involve, and train personnel and community, especially geographical and political interests.
6. Define roles, responsibilities, communication channels and accountability structures.
7. Evaluate the results.[12]

These recommendations constitute a reasonable approach to any organizational change. Perhaps the emphasis on these aspects suggests that certain cities were deficient in various aspects of planning and implementation. Evaluation, surprisingly, was only mentioned by two directors, and one wonders whether the idea that decentralization is better than any prior arrangement has become "conventional wisdom."

The counsel for special education directors who are about to decentralize is, in sum, to maintain as much control as they can. Most comments pertained to the maintenance of territorial prerogatives, not unlikely advice in the face of the assessment and reassignment of authority in systems undergoing decentralization.

[12] These priorities are not ranked; they are activities ordered in time.

The Quasi-Decentralized Systems

Two systems can be described as quasi-decentralized in that they reflect some of the characteristics of both centralized and decentralized systems. Houston has areas staffed by personnel at the associate and assistant superintendent level but "financial and programmatic elements . . . are strongly centralized" (Houston, p.2). When systems call themselves decentralized but emphasize centralized control in some operational areas, they are not very different from Houston.

Denver has attempted to assign "as much responsibility as possible to the local level" (Denver, p. 2), a development that is apparently in contrast to past situations in its schools. The arrangement suggests that decentralization by virtue of philosophy alone is not decentralization at all.

Decentralization may be just another obfuscatory gambit to buy off the angry and frustrated clients of the schools,[13] a way to maintain the mythic posture of openness and flexibility while placing higher-level personnel in local assignments and thereby virtually guaranteeing the increase of "professional" control.

Gittell's distinction between administrative and political decentralization forces us to conclude that decentralization activity in the respondent cities has been philosophical or administrative. New York seems to be the only city in which political decentralization was achieved, at least in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district, but no data are available on the situation because the questionnaire was not completed.

If decentralization has meant only a minimum of substantive change for school clients (although their attitudes may have been altered somewhat), it may have quickened the insiders' expectations of accomplishment by putting more powerful (relatively speaking) people to work in the spokes of the system rather than at its hub. But, as Kaufman (1971) observed,

> since small localized units are likely to be more homogeneous than more inclusive ones, decentralization gives freer play to constricting parochial interests and local consensus, muting the clash of interests and ideas that animates participants in larger arenas (p. 73).

Only in the future will we be able to measure decentralization's impact, if any, and the criteria for evaluating any change will have to include the improvement of services to children.

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[13] As Theodore Sizer (1973) suggested, while the doomsayers rail at the poor quality of American education, most American parents apparently are not disheartened by their children's education.

To an understandable degree, the directors are caught between the acceptance of what has been thrust upon them and the normal skepticism of the uninvolved. Further, because of their unique position, they are caught up in what Dr. Ernest Willenberg calls "programmatic decentralization": Certain programs have been spun off to schools and areas with central personnel as liaisons between the programs and other parts of the local or state educational system.

Special educators are not so much the perpetrators of these unpredictable administrative inconsistencies as they are the victims. The central offices, for all their rhetoric about decentralization, are like glaciers in releasing matters of budget and personnel to the system's perimeter, and departments of special education must respond like shadows to the slow twists of their larger systems.

The ultimate conclusion may be that decentralization has made only a rare difference for school systems in general and special education in particular. Without very sophisticated and thoughtful planning, programs in special education, already scrutinized by legislators, courts, and a host of other interested parties, may be weakened as program planning, control, and evaluation weaken in the face of increasingly subtle and complex administrative arrangements—whether under decentralization or other forms of reorganization.

As special educators think about and plan programs under whatever kind of organizational design they may work, they might reflect on the wisdom of Piet Hein:

> Our choicest plans
> have fallen through,
> our airiest castles
> tumbled over,
> because of lines
> we neatly drew
> and later neatly
> stumbled over. (p. 17)

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Appendix A

Decentralized School Systems

Atlanta Public School System

Size: City population of 479,000; 150 schools, 8,000 employees
Budget: $102 million
Enrollment: 90,000 total
Ethnic Distribution: 80% Black
20% Other
Population Trend: Atlanta's population is declining at the rate of approximately 5600 per year.
Structure Before Decentralization: "Before decentralization, the Atlanta School System had 120 principals who considered the superintendent as his immediate administrative superior. The school system had become so large that the superintendent could not work directly and satisfactorily with 129 units."
Approximate Date of Implementation: 1966

Baltimore City Public Schools

Budget: $220 million
Ethnic Distribution: 70% Black
30% White
Population Trends: Although there has been a migration of both whites and blacks to suburbs, there has been a recent stabilization in out-migration.
Approximate Date of Implementation: 1970

Boston Public Schools

Enrollment: 97,000 in the Boston Public Schools
(29,000 in the Parochial Schools)
Ethnic Distribution: 38% Black
57% White
5% Spanish
Population Trends: "Formerly diminishing population tending to stabilize."

Structure Before Decentralization: Typical line-staff, organized by level—Divisions of Elementary, Junior High, Secondary, Personnel, etc.

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1966

Chicago Public Schools

Enrollment: 556,788 (1972)
Ethnic Distribution: 56.9% African or Negroid origin
31.0% Caucasian
11.1% Spanish surname
.8% Oriental
.2% American Indian
Population Trends: Caucasian population is decreasing; Spanish population increasing
Approximate Date of Implementation: 1968-1969

Detroit Public Schools

Population: 1,512,893
Enrollment: Approximately 270,000
Ethnic Distribution: 67.3% Black
30.8% White
1.9% Other
Population Trends: The city population has declined over 100,000 in the ten years between censuses.

Structure Before Decentralization: Organized into the divisions of school administration, business affairs, curriculum and research, governmental relations and fiscal planning, school housing, staff relations, school and community relations.

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1970

Los Angeles Unified School District

Size: 711 square miles; 654 schools; 60,000 employees
Budget: $1 Billion
Enrollment: 607,723 Regular K-12 Day Schools
114,165 Community Adult and Occupational Centers
4,915 Schools for the Handicapped
726,803 Total Enrollment

Ethnic Distribution:	All Regular Schools	Special Education Schools
White (other than Spanish surname)	45.9%	39.3%
Minorities	54.1%	60.7%

Structure Before Decentralization: System organized by level—Divisions of Elementary Education, Secondary Education and so on.

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1971

Memphis Public School System

Size: City Population of 323,530
Enrollment: 119,415 total
Ethnic Distribution: 32.1% White
67.9% Black
Population Trend: "The city has a relatively stable growth rate due to a declining birth rate."
Structure Before Decentralization: "... major decisions were made at the central office involving the superintendent and six assistant superintendents." Presumably the system was the line-staff, differentiation-by-level type.

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1970

Dade County Public Schools—Miami

Population: 1,267,792 and predicted to be in excess of 2 million by 1980.
Enrollment: 242,344 total
Ethnic Distribution: 26.4% Black
.4% American Indian
24.5% Spanish surname
.2% Oriental
48.5% Other
Budget: $348.7 million
Structure Before Decentralization: Line-staff, organized by level.
Approximate Date of Implementation: 1964(?)

Minneapolis Public Schools

Population: 450,000
Enrollment: 58,000
Ethnic Distribution: 15% Minority

Population Trend: "Demographic changes have included the outflow of those who are younger, those who have more money, and those whose children represent ability . . . to score well on traditional indices of achievement."

Structure Before Decentralization: Executives in charge of elementary and secondary, with assisting consultants and directors; central office personnel not assigned to elementary or secondary were parcelled out to assistant superintendents for elementary and secondary.

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1973

Oakland Unified School District

Enrollment: 56,458 Grades K-12
7,707 Adult Education
64,165 Total

Ethnic Distribution: 62.8% Black
21.8% White
7.8% Spanish
5.5% Asian
1.2% Other

Structure Before Decentralization: "Previous to decentralization, all functions emanated from the 'Central Office' after deliberations at the various segments of the school system. . . ."

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1970

School District of Philadelphia

Population: Approximately 2,000,000

Enrollment: 280,000. An additional 120,455 pupils are served by parochial schools.

Ethnic Distribution: 61% Black
4% Spanish-speaking
35% Other

Budget: $369,190,500

Structure Before Decentralization: Line-staff by area by level.

Approximate Date of Implementation: 1970

Portland Public Schools

Enrollment: 65,000

Ethnic Distribution: 10% Black
90% Other
Population Trends: Student population decreasing by about 3000 per year.
Structure Before Decentralization: Traditional line-staff by level.
Approximate Date of Implementation: 1970

Centralized School Systems

Buffalo Public Schools

Size: 42.67 square miles; 462,768 population; 194 public and private schools.
Enrollment: 60,348
Population Trends: a slight drop in pupil membership, generally at the elementary level.
Ethnic Distribution: 41.2% Black
2.9% Spanish surname
.9% American Indian and Oriental
55.0% Other
Structure: Typical line-staff by area and by level

Cleveland Public Schools

Population: 750,879
Enrollment: 137,572
Ethnic Distribution: 57.4% Black
2.2% Spanish surname
.6% American Indian/Asian American
39.8% Others
Population Trend: "A city to suburb moving trend," with the percentage of white pupils increasing.
Structure: Typical line-staff by area and level

Dallas Independent School District

Population: 894,000 with 1,000,000 predicted for 1980
Enrollment: 153,000 total
Ethnic Distribution: 41% Black
11% Mexican-American
47% Other
Population Trend: Short term projections for decrease in Caucasian population and an increase in other proportions.
Structure: Line-staff; Ass't Supts. for Communication and Personnel; Associate Superintendents, one for operations, one for development, four Ass't. Superintendents by level.

Denver Public Schools

Size: 100 square miles, 143 buildings in school system
Enrollment: approximately 88,000
Population Trends: a decline of about 3000 students for each of the last two years.
Ethnic Distribution: .4% American Indian
17.2% Negro
.8% Oriental
23.3% Spanish surname
58.3% Other
Structure: "We have decentralized some in terms of philosophy—as much responsibility as possible is delegated to the lower level. This is, however, a prerogative of the central administration in terms of how much authority is delegated to principals at the local level."

Houston Independent School District

Enrollment: 230,000
Ethnic Distribution: 41% Black
40% Anglo
18% Mexican-American
Budget: $140,000,000
Structure: "The Houston Independent School District is not decentralized in the traditional sense of the term. There are six administrative units in the city which correspond to six geographical areas. Both the financial and programmatic elements of the program are strongly centralized."

Milwaukee Public Schools

Enrollment: 123,233
Ethnic Distribution: 31.2% Black
.7% American Indian
3.6% Spanish surname
.3% Oriental
64.2% Other
Structure: Line-staff by area and level

San Diego Unified School District

Population: 763,000
Enrollment: 123,984

Ethnic Distribution: 71.7% Other White
13.2% Black
11.3% Spanish surname
1.6% Oriental
.2% American Indian
2.0% Other non-White

Structure: "At the present time the San Diego Unified School District is not involved and does not plan to be involved in a decentralized program."

San Francisco Unified School District

Population: 715,674
Enrollment: 105,892
Ethnic Distribution: 29.4% White
14.0% Spanish surname
30.5% Negro
17.0% Oriental
9.2% Other non-White

Structure: "The Elementary Division is organized in seven geographical areas for decentralization/integration purposes. . . . Although each area has an administrator in charge, the administrators are not autonomous from Central Office Administration."

Appendix B
Questionnaire

Special Education in Decentralized City School Systems

I. Please give a brief description of your city and the school population. Include data on ethnic distribution of pupils, population trends, general financial condition, etc.

II. Describe the school system structure before decentralization. (In addition, use a diagram if you feel it would be helpful.)

(If your system has not decentralized and is not presently planning to decentralize, please stop here.)

III. History of decentralization.

a. What forces (formal and informal, educational, political, ethnic, etc.) were involved in instigating the plan?

1. Inside the system
2. External to the system

b. Outline, as best you recall, the phases of the decentralization process with approximate dates.

c. Discuss briefly the goals of the various groups (formal and informal, educational, political, ethnic, etc.) involved in the process.

d. To what extent was the process carefully planned—to include people in special education, for example, so that all elements of the schools could make particular plans?

e. Describe any conflict in the decentralization process and its ultimate effect.

IV. Describe the decentralization plan:

a. General. Include information on the number of districts, a brief overview of administrative and advisory structures, summary of budgetary authority given to districts, etc. (In addition, use a diagram, if helpful.)

b. Describe what was planned for the special education organization under decentralization.

c. Were similar changes proposed for other facets of the school program—such as physical education, vocational education, counseling, curriculum and instruction?

(If your system has not *implemented* a decentralization plan, please stop here.)

V. Please describe what has happened under decentralization to central office functions in Special Education using subhead-

ings given below by checking appropriate box and commenting in right-hand space. Additional space is available for functions not covered in this list.

Function	*Retained by Central Office*	*Decentralized*	*"Shared"*	*If "Shared" explain briefly*
Needs Assessment				
Program Planning and Organizing				
Finance/Resource Development				
Program Direction/Supervision				
Consultation				
Program Evaluation				
Research				
Parent/Community Relationships				
Record Keeping				
Inservice Education				
Pupil Identification				
Child Study/ Case Management				
Staff Development				
Budgeting				
Other Functions				

a. Describe changes which have occurred in the position and functions of the city-wide or central "director of special education."

b. How were programs in "pupil personnel" (school psychology, school social work, counseling, etc.) affected by decentralization?

VI. Special education in decentralized units: Some specific questions.

a. What trends, if any, have been evident in EMR programs since decentralization was initiated?

b. Please describe the general attitudes of the area superintendents and principals toward special education under the decentralized arrangements.

c. Are special education plans and programs tending to become more innovative and thus different among the several districts or areas?

d. Who has authority to recruit and select new personnel for special education and who controls their tenure?

e. What happened to highly specialized programs for low-incidence handicaps? Who "runs" them?

f. What have been the effects on decentralized processes of "right to education" suits and other court actions directed to your city as a whole or to your state?

g. What is the relationship of district special education directors, if any, to their area superintendents versus their responsibility to the central special education director?

VII. Problems

a. As you look back, what problems and difficulties in connection with decentralization did you correctly foresee at planning stages?

b. Please describe the major problems, difficulties and issues which you have actually encountered in the decentralization process.

c. What long-range problems and issues do you now foresee in connection with decentralization in your system?

VIII. Evaluation

a. What "gains" and "losses" do you see in your city's special education programs as a result of decentralization?

b. In general, do you feel decentralization has been a "plus" and that it will be in the future? What kinds of evidence do you have on this question?

c. Have programs in special education come "closer to the people" in policy formation as a result of decentralization? Do you have evidence?

d. Are "districts" becoming the initiators of change under the decentralization system? Or, do the real forces for innovation come from central offices or the city as a whole? Or are there relatively few forces for innovation?

IX. In discussing decentralization with someone from a system about to decentralize, what kinds of priorities would you establish for attention by:

a. General leaders in the school system?

b. Directors of special education?

Appendix C

A Study of the Effects of Decentralization on Special Education in Two Large Urban School Districts

Questionnaire
Part 1

Name _____

Position _____ _____

How long in present position? _____

How long with Philadelphia system? _____

(If previously with another system, for how long? _____
In what position? _____)

(Administrators and Supervisors)
How many people under you are you directly responsible for? _____

(Teachers)
How many children are you responsible for? _____

To whom are you primarily responsible? _____

ADMINISTRATORS

1. Have there been any changes in your role in the past few years?
   a. What engendered those changes?
   b. Have the changes made any difference in your daily activities?
2. What are your goals in relationship to special education in this city?
   a. Do you see any possible conflicts between your goals and those of the school system? If so, please explain.
3. What kinds of institutional support do you feel will help to create on-going modifications in special education?
   a. What kinds of changes would you like to see made?

4. To what degree is your whole faculty committed to the education of handicapped children?
5. How are candidates selected for or referred to your program?
   a. Must they come from within this district?
   b. Are there similar programs in other districts of Philadelphia?
      (1) How many?
      (2) Do you feel there is any duplication of services which might be resolved through consolidation?
6. Is there any mechanism which allows you input in describing or determining the special needs of exceptional children?

   For teachers?

   For principals?
7. Consider the effectiveness of your program in serving (1) children *in* the program; and (2) children who might benefit from the program.
   a. What do you see as its strengths and weaknesses?
   b. What supports, designs, sources, preparations and changes do you feel might positively affect those areas you have described as weaknesses?
8. How are special education services being evaluated?
   a. What are the criteria being used?

TEACHERS

1. Have there been any changes in your role in the past couple of years?
   a. What engendered those changes?
   b. Have the changes made any differences in your daily activities?
      (1) Meetings
      (2) Sharing—other teachers
      (3) Curriculum
2. How are candidates selected for or referred to your program?
   a. Must they come from within this district?
   b. Are there similar programs in other districts of Philadelphia?
   c. Do you feel there is any duplication of services which might be resolved through consolidation?
3. What are your goals in relationship to special education in this city?

4. What kinds of institutional support do you feel will help to create on-going modifications in special education?
   a. What kinds of changes would you like to see made?
5. Do you follow a curriculum?
   a. Is the curriculum used on a district-wide or city-wide basis?
6. To what degree is your whole faculty committed to the education of handicapped children?
7. Is there any mechanism which allows you input in describing or determining the special needs of exceptional children?
8. Consider the effectiveness of your program in serving (1) children *in* the program; and (2) children who might benefit from the program.
   a. What do you see as its strengths and weaknesses?
   b. What supports, designs, sources, preparations, and changes do you feel might positively affect those areas you have described as weaknesses?
9. How are special education services being evaluated?
   a. What are the criteria being used?

PARENTS

1. Are there any significant changes in your child's behavior?
2. What are your goals in relationship to special education in this city?
   a. Do you see any possible conflicts between your goals and those of the school system?
3. Is there any mechanism which allows you input in describing or determining the special needs of exceptional children?
4. What kinds of changes would you like to see made?

Part 2

Effects of Decentralization on Special Education Programs

1. Was decentralization ever an issue for Special Education in the school district as you see it?
   a. Did the study on decentralization have any effect on you and/or your activities?
   b. How did the recent Pennsylvania court case affect the same?

2. Have there been attempts by lobby groups to move toward decentralization? (If not, move to question #7.)

3. Were the lobby groups parent groups or groups of outside people?

   a. Were any of these groups primarily concerned with the needs and services of handicapped children?

4. Did either of these groups see decentralization as a means to program change in Special Education or as a better form of decision making? (If decision making, move to question #6.)

5. If program change, was change behavioral (in Special Education staff or children) or structural (monies, staff organization, or other)?

6. If decision-making, was the purpose seen as creating a more responsive system or was decision-making at local level seen as an end in itself? [responsive: pressure points]

7. Were there other pressures (not) to decentralize? (if not administrative influence, move to question #11)

8. If pressure was administrative influence, was the cause seen as (too) experimental (of a) project or a response to (resist) pressure from other sources?

9. If decentralization was seen as (too) experimental (of a) project were the (negative) effects on programs like Special Education [e.g. behavioral changes, $s, staff organization, or others] viewed as the main purpose or side effects?

10. If (resistance to) decentralization was based on pressure from other sources, did administrative influence seek (no) positive effects or (failed to) believe in concept of local control? [other sources: Federal gov't. & threat of $s?]

11. If pressure (not) to decentralize came from sources other than administrative, was one of those sources staff [Special Educator] influence?

12. Was that influence based on (no) belief in the concept of decentralization or (resistance to) pressure from the other sources? (If not belief in concept, move to question #14)

13. If (no) belief in the concept of decentralization, are positive effects (not) perceived in practice? [effects: behavioral changes, $, organization of staff, etc.]

14. If (resistance to) pressure from other sources did Special Education staff (fail to) show that they were not professional hold-outs to decentralization or (not) believe in effectiveness of program?

15. What solutions other than decentralization do you see as positively affecting the provision of Special Education in the district?

16. Would you consider Special Education to be a top, medium, or low priority in the system?

17. Despite positive effects (if any) does decentralization create any special problem for Special Education programs?

18. Is there a sense of cooperation among students, parents, teachers, and administrators in relation to providing for the needs of people with special requirements in the district?

19. Does the district receive assistance from other institutions, universities, government agencies, etc. in order to provide for students with special needs in improved or more extensive ways?

20. How would you characterize this interview—helpful/illuminating; puzzling/confusing; or intruding/useless?

Part 2 (revised)

1. Is decentralization an issue that affects Special Education?

2. How did decentralization begin? Which groups were involved in the process—parents, administrators, teachers, lobby groups?

3. Were any groups primarily concerned with the needs and provision of services to handicapped children?

4. Was decentralization seen as a
   a) program change—behavioral change in staff or children, structural change in distribution of funds or staff organization?
   b) change in the form of decision making—local control or more responsive system of decision making?

5. Were there other sources of pressure to decentralize (e.g., gov't agencies, teachers' union, others)? Were any groups opposed?

6. Assuming decentralization directly affects Special Education, is there anything unique about Special Education that makes the interdiction with a decentralized system different from other areas of the school system?

7. What has been the result of decentralization on the provision of special education services as you see it?

8. What solutions other than decentralization do you see as positively affecting the provision of Special Education?

9. Would you consider Special Education to be a top, medium, or low priority in the system?

10. Despite positive effects (if any), does decentralization create any special problem for Special Education programs?

11. Is there a sense of cooperation among students, parents, teachers, and administrators in relation to providing for children with special needs?

12. Does the district receive assistance from other institutions, universities, government agencies, etc. to improve the provision of services to children with special needs?